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ABSTRACT

This collection of more than 40 papers was selected from more than 150 presentations at the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading sponsored by the Reading Association of Nigeria and the International Reading Association's International Development in Africa Committee. The collection is divided into seven sections. Under Section 1--Towards Building Literate Communities in Africa--is the following paper: "Towards a Reading Society" (Pai Obanya). Under Section 2--Promoting a Culture of Reading: General Issues--are these papers: "Destroying the Reading Culture-A Way Backwards: A Beginner's Guide to Millennial Ignorance" (Tony Marinho); "Concept of the Children's Reading Tent as Practised in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe" (Agrena Mushonga); "Portable Libraries as Vehicles for Literacy Development: A Library Service to Pupils and Prisoners in Nigeria" (Virgina W. Dike); "Mobilising Local Resources for Reading Promotion" (Miriam Bamhare); "What Are Students in Botswana's High Schools Reading?" (Arua E. Arua and Mary Lederer); "Cultivating a Reading Culture in a High School in Swaziland" (Virginia Thontea Dlamini); "Family Basic Education in Uganda" (Simon Kisira); "Developing and Promoting Lifetime Reading Habits in Kenya: The Reading Tent Project and Njoro Reading Facility" (Margaret Makenzi); "Masifunde Sonke: Building a Nation of Readers in South Africa" (Mandla Maseko and Beulah Thumbadoo); "Reviving a Culture of Teaching and Learning through Parents and Schools Learning Clubs" (Letta Mashishi). Under Section 3--Promoting a Reading Culture: Book Development--are these papers: "Multipronged Approach to Promoting a Reading Culture: The East African Experience" (James Tumusiime); "Promoting a Reading Culture" (Pilli Dumea); "Association for Creative Teaching as an Agent for Book Development in Cameroon" (Patrick Mbunwe Samba; Mike Nwana; N.M. Tangu; Semuyeh Nyugab); "Demystifying Science for Children through Reading: The ELSSA Approach" (Sam T. Bajah); "Girls and Literacy: Gender Issues in Textbooks for Primary Schools Children in Cameroon" (Vivian Yenika-Agbaw); "Publishing Cross-Border Languages: Problems and Aspects" (Egido Mpanga). Under Section 4--Literacy Development for Special Populations--are these papers: "Development and Uses

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of a 100 High-Frequency Sight Words Recognition List for Children with Reading Failure" (Comfort N. Boison); "Promoting Literacy among the Visually Handicapped: The ANWAB Experience in Nigeria" (Danlami Basharu); "Study in the Use of Creative Reading to Educate Gifted Students in Regular Schools in Gaborone, Botswana" (Margaret O. Biakolo); "Reaching Out with Literacy to the Youth in Crisis Areas: The Unique Experience of Karamoja, Uganda" (Samuel Andema); "Teaching Reading in a Special School for Mentally Retarded Children in Zimbabwe" (Maureen Mnkandla). Under Section 5--Improving Reading Instruction--are these papers: "Building a Reading Culture in Communities Where Adverse Situations Thrive" (Isaac A. Olaofe); "ADEA Compendium of Successful Reading Projects" (Sizakele Shongwe and Carew Treffgarne); "Using News on the Board to Develop Literacy in a Vacation Programme" (A.E. Obot; E.P. Ntukidem; Bassey A. Okon; Stella A. Ansa); "Developing Literacy through Reading the World and the Media" (Stella A. Ansa; Bassey Ude Bassey; Eno Nta; J.O. Okwe); "Karatu Workshops on Literacy and Development in Nigeria: A Participant's Experience" (Wale Adegbite); "Producing Materials in the Classroom: The Karatu Big Books Production Experience" (Gabriel B. Egbe and Louisa E. Uwatt); "Multiple Roads to Literacy" (Yetta Goodman); "Upgrading Reading Instruction through Teacher Study Groups" (Alis Headlam); "Strategies for Sharing Books with African Children" (Doris Walker-Dalhouse); "Challenges to Reading Teachers in Multilingual Settings in South Africa" (Lydia Abel); "Developing an Appropriate Reading Assessment Programme for Developing Countries" (O.A. Afemikhe). Under Section 6--Concentrated Language Encounter Programme for Literacy Success in Developing Countries--are these papers: "Concentrated Language Encounter: A Revolutionary Approach to Teaching Literacy" (Saowalak Rattanavich); "Literacy Development: Lessons Learned from a Pilot Concentrated Language Encounter Project in South Africa" (David Donald; Janet Condy; Jana Forrester); "Lesson Learned from a Concentrated Language Encounter Pilot Project in Nigeria" (Charity A. Andzayi; Pita Deshi; Sarah Nengel; Danladi Pyelshak); "My Experience Using a Concentrated Language Encounter to Develop Literacy Skills in Persons with Learning Handicaps" (Nenrot Victor Gomwalk). Under Section 7--Literacy Instruction in the Mother Tongue--are these papers: "Improving Literacy in Primary Schools in Nigeria through the Mother Tongue" (Maria J. Aaron); "Incorporating the Mother Tongue into Special Education for Children with Reading Failure" (Charity A. Andzayi); and "Mother Tongue Literacy in the Zambian New breakthrough to Literacy Programme" (Francis Sampa). (NKA)

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READING FOR ALL IN AFRICA

Building Communities Where Literacy Thrives

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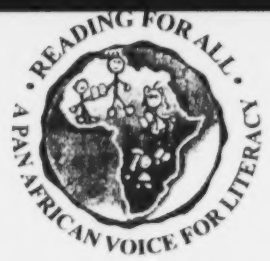

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We dedicate this publication to the memory of our brother and a passionate activist for the cause of literacy in Africa.
Patrick Mbunwe Samba
of the Association for Creative Teaching, Cameroon.

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Foreword

On behalf of the International Reading Association, I am honored to provide this foreword to *Reading for All in Africa: Building Communities Where Literacy Thrives*, the proceedings of the 2nd Pan-African Reading for All Conference.

The Reading for All conference series was born in 1999 in Pretoria, South Africa, as an initiative by the International Reading Association and UNESCO to bring together professionals who will contribute to strategic planning, implementation, and analysis of education reform in Africa. With the release of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, the conference series has become a passionate effort of the Association—especially our International Development in Africa Committee (IDC-Africa) and its affiliates throughout Africa—to create a community of literacy professionals engaged in innovative research and practice to extend professional development opportunities and to stimulate regional networking among those working at the grassroots level. The Reading Association of Nigeria, which hosted and worked tirelessly on the 2001 conference in Abuja, Nigeria, deserves special recognition for its efforts to remind the world that meeting the goals of Education for All by 2015 requires *pan-African* solutions drawn on local perspectives and experience.

Although this publication represents many of the finest literacy professionals working in or on behalf of educational development in Africa, it represents just a part of the vast intellectual capital to be found within this region. IDC-Africa is utilizing this forum to expand its network—particularly to promote literacy for all—and to strengthen education associations as vehicles for professional development, advocacy work, partnership-building, and dissemination of new knowledge within Africa. The concept of voluntary service to the cause of literacy is aligned with a desire to instill and validate the professionalism of teachers, teacher educators, community workers, librarians, publishers, and other literacy advocates who are ensuring that all children, adolescents, and adults have access to high-quality education.

Of the 23 countries selected by the World Bank as most "at risk" of not providing every girl and boy with quality primary school education by 2015, *13* of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. Reversing this condition requires innovative solutions in both formal and informal education sectors, investing in children for the future, and also investing in families and communities as places where literacy development can thrive. Solutions already exist in Africa. They need to be located, made visible, and energetically disseminated through regional partnerships and networking opportunities such as the Reading for All conference series.

We give special thanks to the Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria, UNESCO, UNICEF, and World Bank for their financial, technical, and promotional efforts on this conference. Without the crucial support of Shell International and Ford Foundation, who facilitated the participation of more than 45 literacy professionals throughout Africa, the conference would not have been truly pan-African.

We hope you will be encouraged through this publication to participate in, support, and tap into the International Reading Association's expanding regional network. Together, we will accomplish great things as we make progress toward our shared goal of literacy for all.

Alan E. Farstrup
Executive Director
International Reading Association
Newark, Delaware, USA

Preface

Reading for All in Africa: Building Communities Where Literacy Thrives contains 40 papers carefully selected from more than 150 presentations at the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading for All, which was hosted by the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) in Abuja, Nigeria, from October 7–12, 2001.

Two important motivations led to the publication of this collection of papers. The first one reflects a main aim of the Conference itself—to act as a forum for the interchange of ideas by people interested in the development of literacy in Africa. For far too long, the creation of a forum where scholars, academics, literacy experts, ministries of education officials, and members of other corporate bodies interested in the literacy development of Africa could interact was neglected. However, with the declaration of the United Nations Literacy Decade slated to begin January 1, 2003, the need for such a forum became very urgent indeed.

As a consequence of the need for this forum, the International Development in Africa Committee (IDC-Africa), a standing committee of the International Reading Association, instituted the Pan-African Reading Conferences to actualise the United Nations's goal of education for all. IDC-Africa already has achieved some successes thanks to the active support of the Association, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and collaboration with African reading associations.

READ Educational Trust hosted the 1st Pan-African Reading for All Conference, which was held in Pretoria, South Africa, in August 1999, and brought together the leaders in literacy education from Africa and the rest of the world. The success of the conference and the tremendous enthusiasm and goodwill it generated led to its institution as a biennial event. Some of the papers from the 1999 Conference have been published in *Proceedings of the 1st Pan-African Reading for All Conference*, edited by Seth Manaka (2000), and *Reading for All in Africa: Building Communities Where Literacy Thrives* is a sequel to that publication.

The second reason for publishing this volume is the need to develop literacy materials on best practices in African literacy education because of the current unavailability of resources that address the peculiar conditions that exist on the continent. This longstanding problem can be solved only by a sustained effort at literacy materials development. Therefore, this volume addresses the problem directly in a profound and fundamental way.

This book's seven sections cover areas that are considered germane to the literacy development of Africa. Section 1 contains the lead paper of Pai Obanya. The paper highlights the condition of literacy in Africa and argues the general need for establishing Africa as a community where literacy should thrive. Sections 2 and 3 discuss the need for the promotion of a culture of reading in Africa, an issue that continues to be an important aspect of the African literacy discussion. Although Section 2 discusses several issues related to the promotion of a reading culture at various levels within and outside the African educational system and across the continent, including resources, libraries, reading habits and attitudes, family literacy, and the lack of a reading culture, Section 3 concentrates exclusively on book development. Many of the papers in Section 3 argue that a reading culture cannot develop in a book-poor environment. The articles urge various entities, such as governments, publishers, and teachers, to participate in the development of the book industry in Africa.

Section 4 contains papers that discuss special populations—children who have reading disabilities, visual handicaps, mental retardation, or giftedness, as well as children who have reached upper primary school as nonreaders and children in crisis areas. The papers in the section make a major point about the need to pay sufficient attention to the literacy development of these groups of people in Africa.

Section 5 addresses reading instruction, and the various papers in the section support the reading researchers' views on reading strategies and

excellent reading teachers (see, for example, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). According to this viewpoint, teachers should, among other things, have a repertoire of strategies for teaching diverse groups of students how to read. "The ADEA Compendium of Successful Reading Projects" by Sizakele Shongwe and Carew Treffgarne and "Multiple Roads to Literacy" by Yetta Goodman both indicate the necessity of adopting multiple reading instructional strategies as the best way to teach literacy. The other papers in the section show how different instructional strategies can be deployed to achieve great literacy dividends in Africa.

Section 6 concentrates on the Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) instructional method. Concentrated Language Encounter, funded by the Rotary International Lighthouses for Literacy Project in developing countries worldwide, is a literature-based instructional programme that successfully develops literacy skills in schools where resources are limited. CLE was initially developed and tested in Thailand and was later adopted in Nigeria and South Africa. The papers in this section argue that the program's successes in these countries make it a candidate for adoption and use in additional countries in Africa and other parts of the developing world.

Section 7 is on literacy instruction in the mother tongue, which should not be a surprise because this subject is at the root of many of Africa's literacy problems. Since 1953, when the United Nations declared the mother tongue the medium of instruction in which a child can be most effectively taught, using the mother tongue in Africa—one of the most linguistically complex continents of the world—has been an abiding concern for literacy educators. The papers in this section describe the Zambian New Breakthrough to Literacy programme, a local version of the Breakthrough to Literacy programme successfully implemented in Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa, and discuss how to improve and incorporate mother tongue literacy into educational programmes in Nigeria and—by implication—other developing countries.

This collection of papers will be of interest to a large and diverse audience. In particular, Ministries of Education officials responsible for policy formulation in various African countries will find it very useful, as will nongovernmental organisations that promote literacy, other literacy workers, parents, teachers, and scholars. It is hoped that this volume will lead to cooperation among African countries.

IDC-Africa and RAN are grateful to the many people and organisations that provided immeasurable support for the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading for All from which the papers in this publication were selected. IDC-Africa and RAN owe their gratitude to the International Reading Association (especially its International Development Division in Washington, D.C.), UNESCO, and UNICEF for their interest in the conference and for financial and logistical support; Shell International in the United Kingdom for sponsoring more than 90% of the African participants to the conference; and the African Publishers Network (APNET) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) for sponsoring participants. Thanks also are due to the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria along with the Universal Basic Education Unit and the Education Tax Fund, which worked in consonance with the Ministry of Education for endorsing the conference and providing funds and logistical support.

Finally, IDC-Africa and RAN are grateful to the Ford Foundation and Shell International for making funds available to publish this material and to the International Reading Association's Publications Division for editorial support.

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SECTION 1

Towards Building Literate Communities in Africa

Towards a Reading Society

Pai Obanya

Nigeria

Reading comprehension is essentially the same as thinking, and it should be taught as such. As a highly cognitive activity, reading can and does occur at various skill and cognitive levels. Reading performance at the higher levels usually builds on reading competence at each of the preceding lower levels. Table 1 illustrates this concept.

Table 1 illustrates that for reading to be meaningful, the process has to be pursued to level 5, in which reading becomes internalized as a habit and a tool for continuous self-improvement. Herein lies the importance of reading for personal and social development. As the opening excerpt notes, reading is essentially like thinking. Therefore, developing one's reading skills can be compared to developing one's intellectual powers. This concept can be extended to the societal level because of the benefits derived from an abundance of reading materials for school instruction; general reading; and the inter- and intragenerational transmission of knowledge, information, and culture through documented history and literature. Therefore, every effort to create an environment that enables the reading development also contributes to the growth of a civilization.

Creating an Environment to Enable Reading to Thrive in Africa

To ensure that reading thrives in Africa, concerted action would be required in three major areas:

- improvement of the social and reading infrastructure
- promotion of reading across the school curriculum
- development of reading extension services

Improvement of Social and Reading Infrastructure

The starting point here should be a framework into which is integrated the following key elements that are closely related to the promotion of reading for the eventual emergence of a reading society: a national education policy, a national language policy, and a national language-in-education policy. Elements of these policies already exist in most African countries; however, although intensive educational reforms began on the African continent in the early 1960s, the reforms have been victims of the tribulations that Africa has experienced in the past 40 years. The renewed move to develop Education for All action plans in response to the Dakar Declaration of April 2000 (available online at http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-leadup/dakfram.shtm) should be an opportunity to ensure that national language development policies help to enlighten basic education reform programmes.

No meaningful educational reform programme can exist if it does not include a book development component. Above all, for a book development policy to be meaningful it must not simply address textbooks. A successful book development policy should comprehensively cover books for all self-improvement purposes.

Another important aspect of the infrastructure for a society in which reading should thrive is authorship development through the encouragement of local talents. It is always preferable to catch these talents when a potential writer is young so teachers possibly can use a student's earlier years of schooling to inculcate writing habits that could become enduring. Authorship development in African indigenous languages is, of course, an area of great priority. Languages like Hausa,

TABLE 1 Reading competencies

Level	Reading Behaviour	Goal
1. Word and/or sentence recognition	Associating words and sentences with sounds; possibly the prevalence of reading aloud	Visual perception, attention, and basic (nontechnical) vocabulary
2. Reading along the lines	Reading for express or literal meaning	Elementary "technical" vocabulary with a limited variety in terms of register
3. Reading between the lines	Reading for implied meaning	Speed improvement, a wider variety of registers, and using reading as a study tool
4. Reading across the lines	Reading for a creative reaction to the reading material	Speed improvement; analytical ability; and advanced language, literature, and imaginative thinking development
5. Reading beyond the lines	Reading as a totally self-directed, pleasurable activity	Lifelong love for reading, fully internalized as a habit and a means of relaxation, inquiry, and lifelong learning

Somali, Malagasy, and Kiswahili are relatively advanced in this regard, but most other African languages will require a great deal of effort to engineer into literary languages. This engineering would be a sure way of keeping the languages alive.

A strong case also should be made for folk authorship, which would involve collecting both traditional folk tales and modern day popular creations for audio and script recording, for use in schools and adult literacy programmes, and for general reading. Overall, reading materials should originate as much as possible from the potential reader's immediate environment in order to be relevant to the reader's needs, to attract and motivate the reader who must identify with the content and message of what is being read, and, above all, to make reading materials easily accessible and affordable.

On the other hand, exposure to reading materials from other places and cultures also makes sound educational sense and is in keeping with the 21st-century phenomenon of shrinking and crumbling national boundaries. Therefore, reading materials from the rest of the world will continue to be part of the reading culture of Africa, but the following conditions will apply:

- The foundation for reading will be laid with materials from the reader's immediate environment.
- Materials from non-African sources will be introduced in a stepwise manner.
- Non-African material will be carefully selected with a strong emphasis on its enrichment potential.

Library development is another critical element of a reading society. This task should begin with a reclarification of the term *library*, with a strong emphasis on what a library is not. It should be emphasized that a library is not just a mere physical location nor a mere collection of books and other reading and study materials. Nor is a library a tool meant only for schools and pupils, although provisions should be made to provide space, facilities, personnel, and funding for school and classroom libraries. Libraries should function as educational support tools and systems by meeting the minimum requirements of physical, social, and intellectual accessibility to their users. Libraries should be adequately equipped and staffed to render different forms of user services and should be flexibly managed and organised to meet the special needs of schools, specialized institutions, homes, and communities.

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The task of library development also should include the teaching of library habits to people in school and out of school, beginning with the development of good reading habits. To this skill can be added the habits of proper collection, care, classification, storage, and retrieval of books and other forms of reading and study materials.

Perhaps the most important infrastructure for the building of a reading society is the generalization of basic education. The internationally agreed-upon goals of basic education are the consolidation of literacy and numeracy skills and the acquisition of life skills and lifelong learning skills, all of which are closely related to reading. If these skills are properly taught to students in a situation of universal and quality basic education, the result will be the production of a critical mass of citizens who can read.

Promoting Reading Across the School Curriculum

A reading society cannot be built without a thorough reengineering of all activities connected with the teaching and learning of reading in schools. Of particular importance here are issues such as the distinction between reading as a discipline in its own right and reading as a tool subject. Also worthy of consideration is what to teach in reading at specific levels of education and how best to do this.

Reading as a distinct subject and reading as a tool subject are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. To a very large extent, the former is a necessary foundation for the latter. To prepare the individual for a life of reading, the basic skills will have to be taught to him or her as an integral part of the language arts programme. At the same time, educators should not forget that reading is necessary for the understanding of every other subject on the school curriculum, including mathematics, the natural sciences, and technical subjects. Therefore, what will be needed in the African school system is to emphasise reading at three distinct but closely related levels:

- reading as a fundamental learning skill for its own sake,
- reading as an integral part of the language arts curriculum to reinforce language skills,
- more specialized reading skills as may be specific to the demands of different subjects on the school curriculum

Seeking appropriate answers to what to teach in reading, at what level, by what means, and in what manner should challenge those seeking to improve the quality of education in Africa as a step towards building a reading society. Table 2 is simply an attempt to encourage more in-depth reflection on this challenge.

Table 2 illustrates the following points:

- Reading development work at one level of formal education is a foundation for work at the next higher stage.
- Some elements of the higher skills of reading development may be present in some form at the lower levels.
- The content and materials for the teaching of reading at all levels should run through all subject areas.

These suggestions are simply a framework for analysis as well as one way of looking at a complex issue.

Development of Reading Extension Services

Extending Reading to the Out-of-School Population. People who are out of school require sustained functional literacy programmes that emphasise literacy for empowerment, improved quality of life, self-discovery, enhanced income earning potentials, and improved ability to make reasoned choices and decisions on matters affecting their own lives. Above all, such programmes should result in an improved capacity for people to participate in their nation's democratic process because of increased literacy skills.

Meeting the Needs of Special Groups. These special groups are the marginalised and often forgotten sectors of society: women, rural dwellers, the urban poor, persons with special learning and/or physical needs, unemployed and/or unskilled youth, prisoners, refugees and displaced persons, people living in conflict and war situations, *almajiris* (young students of Koranic schools who beg for alms every day), migrant populations, and so on. Developing the skills of functional and lifelong literacy for all these groups will have to go beyond

TABLE 2 Reading at different stages of formal education

Stage	Goals	Content	Methods	Materials
Early Childhood	Laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning through reading, speech, and vocabulary development and a variety of prereading activities	Conversations, discussions, listening to stories from the environment and about everyday events	All forms of play methods: story telling, demonstrations, music and dance, pictorial reading, picture books, and so on	Audio and video materials for developing speech and aural comprehension and for associating sounds with letters and pictures
Primary	Inculcating the skills of reading for express or literal meaning	Continuation of the content of the early childhood stage, plus a wide variety of simple readers on subjects of everyday interest to the 6–12-year-old age range	Adaptation of the methods used in early childhood, plus guided reading preceded and followed by discussions and other forms of language development exercises	Same as in early childhood stage, plus well-graded and richly illustrated stories and narrative poems
Junior Secondary	Expanding horizons and improving study skills through reading	Literary and nonfictional materials	Continuation of primary stage methods, plus emphasis on guided reading	Language and non-language-specific texts from local and nonlocal sources
Senior Secondary	Developing reading efficiency (enhanced speed and comprehension)	Language registers covering a wide variety of human activity areas and fields of enquiry	Guided reading circles and clubs Self-study and group activities on reading	Same as junior secondary stage with progressive introduction to a variety of practical exercises (e.g., summaries and extracts from magazines)
Higher Education	Reinforcing reading efficiency, self-study, and research skills	Discipline-specific and general knowledge language registers	Reading remediation through guidance and/or counseling, skill reinforcement, and diagnosis of problems	Specialized books, journals, and materials retrieved through the Internet

lip service to concrete and concerted action, which should respect the following basic principles:

- The groups concerned must be involved fully in developing reading and literacy programmes that directly touch on their lives.
- Reading materials should be closely related to the group members' daily life preoccupations, should be capable of changing their life conditions for the better, and should be devoid of all forms of bias regarding gender and socio-physical conditions.
- Reading and literacy programmes should go hand-in-hand with improvement in living standards; skill enhancement; and economic, political, and social empowerment activities in other areas.

Provision of Programme Support. Such programmes are more or less the same as the social infrastructures for the development of a reading society as discussed earlier. However, these facilities will have to become more easily accessible to out-of-school and marginalised groups in society and should respond to groups' special needs as in the following nonexhaustive but illustrative examples:

- providing rural, community, mobile, and/or special interest libraries, and rural and community print and/or electronic media to meet the special needs of a wide variety of readers
- presenting economic, social, and/or political empowerment and awareness-raising activities integrated into and reinforcing the literacy and reading promotion activities

Experiments along these lines are occurring in different parts of Africa. The time has come for the lessons from such experiments to be fully documented for wide-scale dissemination.

A Word on Information Technology and the Development of a Reading Society in Africa

The development and large-scale use of information technology has created a new impetus for reading and has not diminished its importance. The following examples highlight this assertion:

- Publishing and printing, two major services in support of reading and literacy, have today been greatly facilitated by information technology.
- Access to reading and study materials from different sources has been made a lot easier by information technology.
- Outreach reading programmes have become easier to organize because of information technology's wider and more flexible coverage capabilities.
- Information technology's interactive potentials make it possible for all sorts of people to contribute to a universal pool of literacy materials.
- Digital libraries, which have been made possible by information technology, have strong potential for mobile libraries that are extension services for the promotion of reading.
- The skills associated with using information technology, such as searching, classifying, selecting, storing, and retrieving, are all closely related to the reasoning skills that are important in reading.

The challenges of generalising the applications of information technology in Africa are, of course, very well known (e.g., poor communications facilities, inadequate and unstable energy supply, the near absence of technology in the wider society, technophobia at the individual level, and high cost). These challenges do not mean, however, that a start cannot be made. With the present state of affairs, promoters of reading in Africa can already mobilise the limited information technology facilities available.

The time has come for the publishing industry in Africa to invest in information technology, and the development of information technology-enhancing facilities should be considered an integral part of national efforts to develop the appropriate social infrastructure for the evolution of a reading society.

Conclusion

The whole world is set on the path of achieving Education for All by the year 2015. Empowerment of all classes in society through literacy is the first step in the process because the ultimate goal is lifelong learning, and reading is the instrument par excellence for acquiring the necessary skills for this pursuit. Sustainable human development requires a critical mass of people with a high level of creativity and the ability to think critically and analytically. For the schools and the nonformal education structures to be better able to promote these skills among all classes in society, action along the lines suggested in this article are the sine qua non. Africa is in dire need of a reading society, and every effort must be made to build communities in which literacy thrives.

SECTION 2

Promoting a Culture of Reading: General Issues

Destroying the Reading Culture—A Way Backwards: A Beginner's Guide to Millennial Ignorance

Tony Marinho

Nigeria

I am an obstetrician and gynecologist, and I attended the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading for All because I am tired of helping women through the trauma of labour only to deliver a child who 10 years later is suffering in an African school that is no better than a pigsty. Educational failure in Africa is related to factors that go beyond the school system. Everyone has a role to play in rescuing the present alarming situation and in helping to bring about Reading for All. We need to look at some of the factors contributing to the problem of reading failure, and in doing so, I will particularly focus on the following five concepts:

1. The importance of a learning environment that is
   - healthy;
   - stimulating;
   - equipped with tables and chairs, blackboards and chalk; and
   - supplied with stimulating learning materials in adequate quantities.
2. The poor quality of the educational input results from
   - the poverty, low status, and inadequate education of teachers; and
   - narrow and restricted syllabi.
3. Ignorance and low literacy are factors contributing to crime via
   - unequal access to education marginalising the poor and powerless, and
   - the lack of community commitment to maintaining schools.
4. There is a need for political will to improve education by
   - looking beyond educating only our own children,
   - looking beyond relying on government alone to mobilise resources, and
   - looking to innovative and low-cost methods of imparting education.
5. It is important to have books available for reading widely and for pleasure, which requires
   - government approval and community support for libraries,
   - not allowing the local African book industry to be destroyed by foreign imports,
   - not condemning the superficial reading of books for pleasure, and
   - thinking creatively of new ways to get books into the community.

Reading for All is a right, and parents need help in giving their children this opportunity. Wealthy Africans teach their own children while only lip service is given to education for the "masses."

The African classroom often is the most desolate and uninspiring environment when it even exists. Many schools simply do not have enough

classrooms, and the days of reading under a mango tree are not over.

Help for Teachers

Many Africans who were trained on the continent must leave it in better shape, but we cannot leave teaching only to the underrespected, neglected, unsupervised, unequipped, uninspired, underpaid, and sometimes uninterested and preoccupied African teacher. Granted, good reading programmes targeted at specific groups such as prisoners and street children exist across Africa, and many teachers and nongovernmental organizations can claim the trophy of excellence. These educators cover the tip of the iceberg of ignorance that threatens to sink the ship of Africa. There are thousands of poor schools, needy cities and villages, and overcrowded classrooms throughout the continent, and most African teachers have never used a library or encyclopedia.

Africa's Ancient Tradition of Literacy and Libraries

The illiteracy quotient is approximately 70% throughout the world and perhaps the highest in Africa, yet Africa's literacy is several millennia old. Was the burning of Cleopatra's library in Alexandria by the Romans really the symbolic end of learning libraries in Africa? Perhaps we need a new 21st-century Cleopatra because how can empty-handed teachers impart the thrill of reading about paddling down the Nile on Cleopatra's barge? How can they discuss the destruction of Alexandria's library with students who have no library themselves? How can they tell students of the Igbo slave who wrote *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African: Written by Himself* (Samuels, 1789/1988) or of *Long Walk to Freedom: An Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Mandela, 1995)? Perhaps using the exploits of Africans in history will help achieve Reading for All because if you do not give children interesting books, then what do you have to use to teach them reading skills? I wrote the poem in Figure 1 (see page 10) as my appeal on behalf of the African children to give them the opportunity to learn to read.

The Need for Simple and Cost-Effective Literacy Measures

Africa has an international debt burden of approximately US$300 per person. Therefore, Africans need to find inexpensive means of improving reading. Communities on the whole do not take an interest in their schools, and the proportion of children who are failing to attend school increases every year. So how can Africans energise the Reading for All programme? One way is to recruit every literate person to teach one person with low literacy ability how to read. Reading also can be made fashionable by using popular sports and music stars to act as role models by discussing how reading has helped them succeed.

Slogans to Raise Interest in Reading

Literate Africans need to spread slogans that will encourage reading. For example, a library could be called a *bookateria* and use the slogan "Come and bite into a book and have more than a look." The Birthday Book concept—buying someone a book for his or her birthday each year—could be encouraged as a new tradition even if it would cost some money to promote the idea.

Africans must carry out the campaigns that are the bread and butter of charity fundraising elsewhere, and volunteers are needed for the street library projects and holiday reading programmes to go around and collect books. The time for saying that other people's projects are good is gone. It is DIY-DIB-DIT time: Do it yourself, do it better, and do it together.

The Importance of Having the Political Will to Improve Education

Some people say that the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading for All was convened to discuss education and reading, not politics, but there is nothing you can do without politics. So many years after the destruction of Alexandria's library, there are now few communities, schools, and local areas with functioning libraries in Africa because libraries are not a political priority. Africans need to educate the politician on the political benefits of Reading for All because a single law can wipe out the gains of education or remove education from the agenda of entire cities and regions.

FIGURE 1 Equiano's lament

Close your eyes,
Remember your road to
Reading.
The First letters taught by
whom?
Mother, Father, Sister, Brother
Or kindergarten teacher?
Where were you taught?
Under a mango tree
Or dodging bombs in
Africa's deserts and forest
floods.

Close your eyes
Remember.
You proudly taught
Your children,
A for Africa . . . we have no
apples
Z for Zebra. . . crossing the
dusty road.

Close your eyes,
Remember.
There are 300 million Africans
Each with a $300 debit to their
credit.
Who is Reading for All the
book of debts?

For all their burdens
They cannot remember
Being taught a letter or a word.
Isn't that politically and
economically absurd?

Close your eyes,
Remember.
Your brilliant brain
Is illiterate in a thousand
laughing languages
And confused at myriad street
corners
Screaming the signs of the
times.
Welcome to the bewilderment
of the majority.

Close your eyes,
Remember.
Illiteracy cannot be cured by
conference calls.
Politicians play powerful
pointless games
Ending in thunderous ovations
a one-hand clap.
Books glued for centuries to
your shelf are no fun to anyone
Till you lend them to someone.

Close your eyes,
Remember.
Reading should be fun
Not learning at the point of a
gun.
Make a book every African's
birthday present.
Something never to resent.

Close your eyes,
Remember.
Don't be so proud
Of your degree of learning
You are also blind, deaf and
dumb
Till you help someone
Like me physically.
Correct drugs and destinations
Need literacy.

Close your eyes,
Remember.
Ignorance may be bliss
But what ecstatic pleasures they
miss.

If knowledge is awesome
power
Illiteracy makes life vinegar
sour.
It is a crime to commit
illiteracy.
But literates excel in
criminality.
Open your eyes
Look around,
Exchange addresses with a
literate hand.
Equiano's lament is that his
1789 story
Is unknown in Africa.
Are we deaf, dumb and blind
Or just illiterate?

Open your eyes
Remember.
Reading for All
Is not just a conference call
Braille is light for the blind,
The spoken book reads to the
sick
And ignites the flames of
success
In the creative orphaned child.

Open your eyes.
Remember.
Books Build Brains.
Can Africa Read For All it is
worth
And out of ignorance.
Only politics will tell.
Meanwhile we are condemned
To an illiterate living hell.
Farewell and welcome.

by Tony Marinho

Financing Reading Education in Africa

Where is the money in Africa? The money belongs to the government, corporate Africa, wealthy Africans with foreign bank accounts, and increasing numbers of Africans working abroad. These finances could be used to support reading education in Africa.

The Role of Government

Governments in Africa must see the private sector as their partner and not as a competitor. Governments must give more awards and recognition to the private sector for excellence and give tax relief and certificated awards for private educational donations and initiatives, instead of overtaxing and overregulating private sector activities.

The stimulus for reading will be a well-oiled national education system with attention paid to planning and supervision. Administration of the system must become routine—not patronage-driven—and governments must increase education budgets and establish minimum standards for schools. Likewise, governments in Africa must recognize that capacity building for teachers is essential for Africa's growth. Vacation, annual training, and continuous updating and grading are serious professional—not political—activities for teachers. An unqualified teacher is bad for the students and for Africa. If Africa relegates teaching to the background, then it sows the seeds of ignorance and its own destruction.

Additionally, government policies on school book purchases need to be examined critically. Purchasing books centrally has destroyed local bookshops, and African children have been deprived of browsing through books and seeing them outside the school context.

Regarding libraries, school library policies for students should include compulsory library use, reading aloud, and assessment on class term reports. Africans must insist that a ward have a 1,000-book library in order to qualify as a ward, a local government authority must have one 10,000- or two 5,000-book libraries, and a state must have ten 20,000-book libraries. These standards will act as measures of civilisation.

Corporate Africa

More corporate social responsibility projects are needed in Africa. African governments should appreciate such projects and assess their contributions when companies apply for contracts. Companies at their annual general meetings always should be encouraged to give more back to society. No African village or hamlet is without some corporate profits being made through product sales, and if the product can get there, then so can a social responsibility project such as a few books, learning pamphlets, and collectible stories or cards.

Additionally, the African advertising media must look at corporate advertising and seek to use it as a constructive developmental tool. The whole area of dual advertising—a product and a social message, which in this case is Reading for All—must be promoted.

Wealthy Africans

Wealthy Africans with large foreign accounts must be persuaded that investment in programmes like Reading for All will confirm their commitment to Africa at a time when the world is again near economic recession.

Help from Africans Abroad

Africans abroad also have a huge role in promoting literacy education and are eager to help with this undertaking. A big caution is that the export of foreign books to Africa, no matter how well-intentioned, can be counterproductive to the growth of the local publishing industry. Moreover, a lot of unsuitable, outdated, and misleading material manages to come into Africa this way—sometimes at great local transport cost. Providing the funds for the purchase and production of local books is an alternative for Africans abroad who want to help.

One exception to this rule of using local reading materials would be the payment in foreign exchange by Africans abroad of subscriptions to *Reader's Digest*, *Nature*, *Science*, *National Geographic*, and similar periodicals for the tens of thousands of African schools and the few existing libraries. Imagine the excitement of the African

recipients waiting for these periodicals in the weekly post.

The Cheap Book Campaign

Africa needs millions of books for millions of people. Africans must look at the book deficit in the same way that they look at the AIDS drugs deficit. If AIDS drugs are not made available at affordable prices, the population of AIDS patients faces extinction, and then there will be no one to buy the drugs and other products in the future. Keep the world alive with cheap, low-profit drugs, and the drug sales will keep your company alive.

The same idea is true for books. We need a cheap book campaign not only for textbooks but also for general interest and popular books. The African book market is underestimated. If every child and adult could afford a personal library of just 10 books, a multimillion book deficit could be filled. The motto for this campaign is "cheap and more are better than expensive and few." People must remember that books often are more expensive in Africa than the same books are in the United Kingdom. Simply allowing local reproduction of copyrighted books would open new African markets for the publishers and authors—markets that would never have contributed to the foreign sales for the books anyway.

Innovative Ways of Organising Libraries

Microlibraries

Africa is a continent of tens of millions of tiny shops but few libraries. Poor reading habits can be addressed by putting between 5 and 20 books in selected shops in areas without libraries, thus turning the shops into instant microlibraries. Over time, the books could be rotated to other shops. Overhead costs for this program would be zero. Security should not be a problem, but if someone steals a book, reads it, and shares it with his or her family, the program's aim still would have been achieved.

Personal Libraries

Do you have a personal *library* or merely personal bookshelves? An essential requirement of a library is that the books are lent to others for reading. Do you lend your books to children, or are you afraid of theft? Instead of fearing theft, just pray that anyone who might steal a book will lend the stolen book to his or her family.

Classroom Libraries

Africa's school libraries can be started again at the classroom level by encouraging every child to bring a storybook to school at the beginning of the term. After students exchange books with one another during the term, each student's own book is returned to him or her at end of the term. Each student will be exposed to 40 or more different books a term, and surely each student will find at least one book interesting. Class recognition for the best reader could be used to further encourage reading.

Book Boxes

Another way of organising school libraries is through the use of a library box created with a small grant from the class's Parent Teacher Association or former students for novels, a dictionary, and an encyclopaedia. Having a locked box ensures security, and the box can be circulated among different classes in turn.

Literature Policy to Broaden Students' Experience of Reading

Limiting storybooks in an entire country to a few that pupils are required to read in-depth actually stunts the Reading for All aims because it requires a depth of understanding and level of concentration that many students cannot sustain. Reading many books superficially is better than reading just one in depth. Therefore, literature booklists in Africa must be quadrupled in length and broadened in students' early school years.

Conclusion

At Educare Trust, my colleagues and I run a youth centre, and I believe that there should be one like ours on every street. The title of this paper may be alarming, but the literacy situation Africa faces is alarming. If Africans do not take steps to deal with the present situation in regard to reading,

African people will remain in ignorance, refugees will continue to leave the continent, and Africa will remain on the bottom rung of the world ladder.

Of course, there are wonderful literacy success stories—helpful drops in the ocean of ignorance—but they are far outnumbered by the failures. Without a comprehensive Reading for All framework, Africans will continue to destroy the reading culture and create millennial ignorance in Africa.

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The Concept of the Children's Reading Tent as Practised in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe

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Background and Introduction

The idea behind the Children's Reading Tent Project is to have centres for children's reading and book promotion. The reading tents themselves comprise the following parts:

1. The library and a cosy reading corner where children can sit on a cushion and read whatever books they prefer. (The library should be well-stocked with children's books for all age levels. Book talks can be held in this section of the tent as well.)
2. A place for storytelling, children's creative activities such as drawing and poetry writing, and teachers' and parents' seminars on issues relating to children's reading.

The reading tent concept was pioneered by the Zimbabwe Book Development Council and is one of the strategies aimed at encouraging and promoting a sustainable literate society. How children's reading tents are used can vary according to local needs. In this paper, I describe the strategies employed in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, a town established in 1978 and covering 560 hectares. The population of 537,505 people has only three public libraries. Chitungwiza was fortunate enough to be the fourth beneficiary of the Children's Reading Tent Project after similar projects had been launched in Mutare, Bulawayo, and Masvingo.

Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent

The Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent was initially managed by the Better Schools Programme Cluster 21, which consists of six primary schools and four secondary schools. The Children's Reading Tent program in Chitungwiza was, however, expanded in order to incorporate other stakeholders and persons interested in reading promotion in the whole town. Altogether, there are 40 schools in Chitungwiza and a number of early childhood education centres.

The Reading Tent Idea

The word *children* in the Children's Reading Tent idea refers to children within the 0 to 15-year-old age group. In Chitungwiza, this whole age group is disadvantaged as far as reading is concerned. The purpose of the Reading Tent programme is to promote the development of a community in which everybody is able to read and write and to consequently appreciate the value of information. Specifically, the Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent is meant to act as a vehicle for the promotion of a sustainable and literate society.

Core Business Values

In order to realise this mission, the Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent programme is committed to the following values:

- the importance of books and reading to the individual and society in general
- diverse and higher quality books for children
- accessibility of books to children of all age groups
- cultural distinctiveness
- promotion of indigenous languages and literature

The Reading Tent Committee

The role of the reading tent committee is to plan, organise, coordinate, and implement reading promotion activities within their area of jurisdiction; and conduct situational analysis in order to be able to identify appropriate reading promotion strategies.

Objectives of Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent

The objectives of Chitungwiza's Children's Reading Tent Project are to

- organise regular reading promotion activities;
- organise activities to celebrate reading festivals such as National Reading Week, World Literacy Day, International Children's Book Day, Zimbabwe International Book Fair, and many more;
- organise skills training workshops for young people wanting to be writers;
- hold workshops, discussions, seminars, and so on for parents, teachers, librarians, and other stakeholders on reading promotion strategies;
- spearhead fundraising activities to finance different programmes and projects for the Children's Reading Tent Project;
- organise book talks and meet-the-author sessions;
- identify and cooperate with organisations that produce and circulate development information in areas (among others) such as human rights, children's rights, health-related issues, environmental issues, and gender issues;
- liase with both electronic and print media in order to create an awareness of reading promotion activities within and outside the town;
- conduct outreach programmes for rural areas in different provinces;
- organise study groups and discussions on contemporary issues affecting reading promotion;
- network to develop joint reading programmes with other organisations;
- conduct periodic research in order to ascertain the impact of reading promotion activities by Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent;
- lobby and advocate for the establishment of more school and public libraries in the town; and
- train more teacher librarians.

Core Business Areas

The core business areas of the Children's Reading Tent Project are as follows:

- reading promotion activities for children of all age groups
- resource mobilisation and management, funding reading promotion activities, capacity building of libraries, lobbying and advocacy, marketing and promotion of the reading tent idea
- research, documentation, and information dissemination
- linkages, networking, partnerships, and facilitating discussion, about books and reading in schools and the community at large

Activities in the Children's Reading Tent

The following activities occur in the reading tent:

- live storytelling and folk tale sessions
- playing reading games and word games and doing puzzles
- drawing, colouring, painting, and so on
- listening to audiotapes with stories, dialogue, plays, rhymes, jokes, and so on, and watching videotapes on contemporary issues
- career guidance—inviting influential people in the community to tell children how they became successful

School-age children sit on cushions or mats and read books. Younger children browse through books at the preschool level. Book-based competitions are held, and children write essays and poems that can be displayed and circulated within the community. Seminars for parents, teachers, and librarians are held on topics such as library use, management, and organisation and the role of information in society. Sometimes authors come to the reading tent and talk about their books.

Situational Analysis

A situational analysis of the Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent Project is useful for assessing progress, identifying the limitations of the programme, and highlighting key strategic issues to help the programme to move forward successfully. The analysis is included in the Appendix.

Conclusion

The Children's Reading Tent concept had been tried in three other locations before Chitungwiza benefited from it. The program has been adapted to local needs, and the Reading Tent Committee is challenged to continue—despite local difficulties and changes—to find the means to continue with its mission to make Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent act as a vehicle for the promotion of a sustainable and literate society.

Appendix: Situational Analysis of the Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent

Internal Strengths—Achievements: There has been considerable interest in activities held under auspices of Chitungwiza Children's Reading Tent Programme. It has become acceptable as a reading promotion centre in the town and, among other things, it has managed to

- train teacher librarians from various schools in the town;
- organise a reading campaign gala that brought together reading club members, school pupils, teachers, publishers, the responsible authorities, and other stakeholders and interested parties;
- make presentations in commemoration of reading festivals and events, specifically in 2000 for World Literacy Day and the United Nations International Week of Science and Peace and in 2001 for International Children's Book Day and the Zimbabwe International Book Fair;
- arrange for reading clubs from various schools to visit an elderly people's home where the children provided entertainment by performing plays and were entertained in return by the elderly, who told them folk tales; and
- have children who were book club members visit a special-needs school and distribute books for browsing and reading.

Limitations, Threats, and Weaknesses—Materials, Management, and Staff: On the materials side were a shortage of funds, the high cost of reading materials, and insufficient production of children's books. On the management side, there was a lack of guidelines, aims, key result areas, and evaluations of the project. On the staffing side, there was the problem of reliance on volunteers that lead to fluctuating commitment levels.

Key Strategic Issues: The Strategic Decisions and Critical Success Factors: Issues identified include redefining the Reading Tent core business, reevaluating the focus of the programmers, and streamlining activities. The following issues are important:

- improvement of organisational image
- organisational structuring and management of the Children's Reading Tent Project
- promotion and marketing of the Children's Reading Tent Project
- human resource training and development
- mobilising resources for financial sustainability through smart partnerships and viable projects and programmes
- establishing a permanent structure for the Reading Programme Tent in Chitungwiza district, hence the need for a reading centre
- providing for consultants, discussions, and debate on issues pertaining to books and reading
- developing linkages and exchanges with writers, writers organisations, and other organisations within and outside the book industry
- creating an awareness of books and reading in Zimbabwe

Portable Libraries as Vehicles for Literacy Development: A Library Service to Pupils and Prisoners in Nigeria

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Nigeria

Literacy development is a major objective of Nigerian education, as set forth in both the National Policy on Education (Nigeria, 1981) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme Implementation Guidelines (Nigeria, 2000). The National Policy puts literacy first among the objectives of both primary and adult nonformal education (pp. 12, 32), while the Implementation Guidelines include literacy among the five specific objectives of the UBE Programme (p. 2). This emphasis on literacy can be traced to the focus on lifelong education as the basis for Nigeria's educational policies (p. 8). The broad aim of basic education, according to the Implementation Guidelines, "is to lay the foundation for life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning-to-learn, self-awareness, citizenship and life skills" (Nigeria, 2000, p. 3). Literacy is seen as an essential tool for acquiring these vital skills. Through literacy, individuals can develop their full human potential and contribute fully as citizens to their communities and nations (UNESCO, 1992, p. 69).

The UBE Programme emphasizes education for *all*. Acquisition of literacy and the other objectives of basic education are not only for school children but also for all citizens, including people who have never attended school and who have left school before completion. The programme is, therefore, a greatly expanded vision of education, which includes informal and out-of-school settings. As if the challenge of developing literacy skills in primary school children were not enough, the programme has now been extended to all youth and adults in a variety of situations.

But how may all these learners acquire literacy? This paper focuses on one method that has been emphasised in the literature—free voluntary reading. Krashen (1993) contends that free voluntary reading is not only the best but also the only way to master a language, whether it is a first or second language. Through wide and voluntary reading, individuals build foundations for independent learning and gain awareness of the broad uses of reading for information and pleasure. However, both voluntary reading and literacy development depend on access to reading materials. One cannot read if there are no materials to read. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has suggested that 800 pages of supplementary reading materials are required to move a learner from primary to independent reading (Knuth, 1998). A number of authors have stressed the availability of books as an important determinant of reading habits (Floyd cited in Emenyonu, 1993; Irving, 1980; Krashen, 1993). Yet, in Nigeria many people lack access to books. There are few or no books in many homes. School and public libraries are few and far between. How can Nigerian children, in school and out-of-school settings, gain access to the reading materials required for literacy?

Portable Libraries as Vehicles to Literacy Development

Portable or mobile libraries have been suggested as one approach to encouraging voluntary reading and, consequently, literacy development. In

his keynote address "Library Development for UBE," given at the 16th Annual Conference of the Nigerian School Library Association, Obanya (2000) stressed the importance of reviving mobile libraries in order to achieve the literacy objectives of the UBE programme. At the same conference, Dike (2000) gave examples of the successful use of portable libraries in the form of boxes, display bags, or carts to extend library services to rural schools in Thailand and Venezuela and adult learners in Tanzania. Mobile libraries conveyed by buses, boats, trains, aeroplanes, and even animals have a long and successful history of bringing public library services to remote populations in countries such as Norway, Australia, Kenya, Canada, India, and Peru. As pointed out by Obanya, such mobile services were a feature of many Nigerian public libraries through the 1970s. Might not such libraries form a starting point for extending reading opportunities to the vast target audience of the UBE programme, thereby encouraging literacy development for all? This paper presents one local effort in this direction.

Description of the Portable Libraries Project

The portable libraries project operates out of the Children's Centre Library at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. The library is a project of a voluntary association—the University Women's Association—and serves as a teaching laboratory of the Department of Library and Information Science. Founded in 1978, the Children's Centre has developed a model children's library with spacious facilities and over 10,000 volumes. In 1988, the library began outreach to selected primary schools in the area through story-hour programmes and library visits. These activities continually revealed the difficulties children face in acquiring literacy and the major obstacle posed by lack of access to books. None of the local schools had libraries; the learning environment was very poor, with textbooks in short supply. The children responded with great enthusiasm to books during story hour, but the content could only be enjoyed if retold in Igbo, their mother tongue. They could not, therefore, be independent readers or learners. On visits to the Children's Centre Library, pupils had great difficulty retrieving information from the simplest materials because of their low levels of literacy. Although, regrettably, the library's materials are almost all in English, the children do not fare any better in written Igbo, again partially because of the lack of reading materials in the mother tongue.

These experiences turned our thoughts to finding a way of providing reading materials on a more regular basis, in the hope that the availability of materials would encourage reading and literacy development. The result was four portable library shelves. One shelf has been placed in an urban primary school, a second shelf is at the local prison, a third shelf was recently introduced at a basic skills centre for out-of-school youth, and the fourth shelf is being stocked for a rural primary school near Nsukka. This paper concerns the first two shelves, which have been in operation for some time.

Union Primary School I in Nsukka

This urban public school is situated in a storied building that was built as a model primary school in the 1970s. It is a privileged school in that it has separate classrooms, but the structure is dilapidated and has leaking roofs and broken floors and windows. Security is also a problem affecting development of a library in this school, but in terms of human resources, two head teachers and a number of classroom teachers have been very supportive and responsive to these efforts. Contact with the school began in 1996 with story hour visits, discussions with teachers, and library visits by teachers and pupils. The portable library service began in November 2000, with an initial collection of 144 books. These books were returned and replaced with a new set of 150 books and a class set of science books in April 2001. During the first three months, the library was operated by a final year student of the Department of Library and Information Science from the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, using the four classes of elementary grades 4 and 5. From April to the end of the school year in July, the library was handled by the head teacher and the teacher assigned to the library. During this time, it was open to all the senior classes, including elementary grade 6, on a voluntary basis during the break. Accommodation posed a problem. The so-called school library is a small store of textbooks, and there is also a large classroom designated "library," but it requires major repairs to the roof and floor before it can be

used and, even then, the room is not secure. For lack of other suitable accommodation, the portable library was opened in either a classroom or the head teacher's office, where it was also stored when not in use.

The Nigerian Prison Service in Nsukka

The prison at Nsukka has approximately 280 male inmates. A minority are convicts, and the majority are awaiting trial. The inmates are young men of educational levels varying from no formal schooling to university degrees. The prison service is supposed to include educational and training programmes for the rehabilitation of the prisoners, but it lacks the facilities to realise this objective. Therefore, the men are often idle except for some internal and external labour assignments.

The portable library service began as a follow-up to a prison visit by the University Women's Association in February 2000. During the discussion with the staff and inmates, the association members realised that the Children's Center Library might have a contribution to make to the imprisoned youth of the community. In March 2000, a portable library collection of 105 books and magazines was delivered to the prison with the understanding that these materials would be exchanged quarterly. Books were added to the library—44 in July and 91 in November—and some books were returned. Library use developed gradually, and by March 2001, a complete exchange was achieved.

Since March 2001, books have been added to and retrieved from the portable library on a gradual basis. A total of 301 books and magazines have been sent on loan to the prison. In addition, the prison has multiple copies of some 30 textbooks, which were incorporated into the collection for borrowing. The library is under the charge of the prison welfare officer, who ran it with the assistance of an inmate in the early months. For about nine months, the portable library was handled by two final year students at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka doing related projects and two National Youth Service Corps members doing their service at the Children's Centre. The library was first accommodated in the prison chapel, the only room with appropriate space and furniture. In March 2001, the library moved to a newly built office that opens onto the prison yard. The service is provided to inmates twice a week, although a number of factors have interfered with keeping this schedule.

Progress of the Portable Libraries Project

The project has now been under way for one-and-a-half years in the prison and almost a year in the primary school. What has been learned so far? What use have the readers made of the portable library collection? What effect has it had on their reading? What problems have been encountered and what are some possible solutions?

Patterns of Use of Borrowing

Each library collection was developed in response to the anticipated and expressed needs of the users. Therefore, some conclusions can be drawn from the stocking of the two libraries. From previous experience, the project organizers anticipated that the primary school pupils would be attracted to picture books and other fiction, but the first stocking underestimated the extent of the books' appeal. The emphasis on stories also can be seen in the number of titles filed under language and literature and the titles filed under religion, which at primary school level consists of Bible stories. The initial stocking overemphasised science books and children's magazines, which proved not to be very popular. In the prison library, the number of fiction titles increased with demand but remained much less than in the primary school. Again, the interest in fiction also can be seen in the number of anthologies filed under language and literature at the prison library. Biography and true-life stories are more available at this reading level and proved to be very popular with the inmates. Unlike in the primary school, magazines are very much in demand at the prison, and the number of magazines has steadily increased over time.

Primary school pupils showed a heavy preference for fiction, which comprised almost two thirds of the books borrowed. Pupils showed much less interest in borrowing nonfiction for voluntary reading. These books comprised about one third of the books borrowed. Even within the nonfiction category, many of the language and literature titles that students' borrowed were graded readers rather than textbooks. Additionally, pupils showed complete disinterest in magazines. This disinterest is somewhat

surprising because the literary magazines contain many stories and the science magazines had proved very popular during story hours in previous years. In actuality, the figures for science and social science reflect borrowing by teachers during the first phase of the project. Teachers borrowed some books to help prepare lessons, and they also selected novels for voluntary reading.

The prisoners' reading choices were more diverse than the choices of the school children. A number of the more educated inmates showed strong interest in fiction titles, even making requests to the librarian and suggestions to each other. The men expressed particular interest in Nigerian titles but read many international books as well. It was difficult to meet the fiction needs of less literate inmates because the easy reading materials from the library tend to be childish in content. As with the primary school collection, many language and literature titles were collections of fiction. In addition to fictional stories, the inmates showed a strong interest in true-life stories or biography.

Although many inmates had an avid interest in fiction, they borrowed many more nonfiction materials. Their nonfiction borrowing revealed a range of interests in the arts, sciences, and social sciences. These interests can be seen in the figures for general nonfiction books, magazines, and textbooks. Unlike in the primary school, magazines were especially popular in the prison: devotional magazines such as *The Word Among Us* or *Decision*, Nigerian and international news magazines, and science and social science magazines such as *National Geographic*. Textbooks at both primary and secondary level also were popular choices for the inmates. This choice reflects many inmates' strong interest in self-education and improvement. A number of the men expressed interest in increasing their command of the English language. Other areas of strong interest were religion (both Christian and Islamic), social studies, government and geography, and business studies. The reading of staff borrowers followed the same patterns as the inmates' reading choices.

Effects of Portable Libraries on Voluntary Reading

Although the study cannot show whether the portable libraries improved their users' reading ability, the increased access to books definitely increased the users' amount of reading. Both user groups confirmed that they had little access to materials for voluntary reading before the introduction of the portable libraries. The researcher who conducted the first phase of the primary school project found that pupils reported doing much more reading during the vacation following the project's start than they had done during the vacation that preceded the project's start. During the second phase of the primary school project, 80 pupils frequented the head teacher's office during the break period in order to borrow books. More time is needed for the project before one can draw more definite conclusions about its effects on the pupils.

The increase in readership in the prison was more dramatic. A comparison of the first five months of the project in 2000 with the same five months of 2001 shows more than a fourfold increase in books borrowed—from 127 books from March–July of 2000 to 566 books from March–July of 2001. The prison staff are now hard-pressed to contend with the number of inmates coming to borrow books from the portable library.

Problems Encountered in the Portable Libraries Project

As with any project, the portable libraries project has encountered certain problems. These problems include the following:

Personnel. Finding sufficient staff to run the libraries has constituted a major problem. Neither the teaching staff of the primary school nor the welfare officers at the prison have had time to open their libraries on a regular basis. The staff also have lacked training in library work. The libraries have operated regularly only when someone from the Children's Centre Library or Department of Library and Information Science has opened them. However, such arrangements were all temporary, and when the program organizers were not available, the libraries might not have been opened for some weeks.

Time. The portable libraries are not yet well integrated with the parent institutions' programmes. Having the primary school library in the head teacher's office open only during the break is hardly a satisfactory arrangement. The head teacher has described how he interviews the

pupils when they return books or asks them to tell each other about what they have read, but he can do this only when he has the time, which is not very often. Many classroom teachers at the primary school have felt that they were too busy covering the syllabus to incorporate library use. Library hours have been cancelled often at the prison because the welfare officer is out or the library hours encroached on some other activity such as visiting hours. For this reason, the prison's library rarely has been open more than once a week. Some days when it has opened, there has been time only to collect books, and borrowing has been postponed to the next week.

Materials. It has proved difficult to provide all the materials the library users need. Supplying the necessary materials especially has been a problem with the less literate prison inmates, who need mature content combined with an elementary reading level. It also has been a challenge to provide sufficient materials with a Nigerian background.

Accommodation. Both the primary school and the prison lack suitable accommodations for a library. The primary school has had the intention for a long time of developing a library and has even designated a room for this purpose, but it has not been possible to effect the necessary repairs to the chosen space. Even if the repairs are done, there is insufficient security at this location. Thieves already have broken into the head teacher's office—the most secure part of the school—and damaged the portable library box. The school administration is hesitant to develop what they cannot secure. The prison is fairly secure, but the space allotted for a library is a small office shared with a prison staff member. The furniture in this room has to be rearranged to set up the library each time it opens. At the prison, a different kind of security precaution stands in the way of setting up a comfortable library with space for reading.

Integration with the institutional programme. For greater and more lasting success, the portable libraries need greater integration with the parent institutions' programmes. In the case of the primary school, reading for pleasure needs to be made part of the classroom experience, and education needs to become more resource-based. At the prison, the portable library materials could be used to support the adult education classes that are taught by university students, but so far, the resources have not been used in this way.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The portable libraries already have been successful in increasing access to books and encouraging voluntary reading for the two groups concerned, groups that were virtually without books or reading opportunities before the portable libraries were introduced. As mentioned previously, the project is only at the beginning: Two additional libraries are being introduced, and the need exists for many more. However, this project is still one small local effort. How can it be extended?

Networks. On a local level, a voluntary association can extend service to a few institutions within its vicinity. Similarly, networks of portable libraries could be based within state or local government agencies. For instance, if State Primary Education Boards are training library officers for schools, they could coordinate the provision of portable libraries to schools and train teachers in the classroom use of libraries. Likewise, State Library Boards could extend services to prisons and hospitals as part of a comprehensive outreach through mobile libraries.

Library development. Portable libraries should not be seen as a final goal. Instead, the libraries can provide an important stimulus to reading and can whet the appetite for a full library service. The introduction of a portable library should lead to institution- or community-based development of a standard library. Thereafter, portable libraries could play a significant role in augmenting collections through periodic exchanges.

Provision of personnel. A portable library will play a limited role at any institution without the proper staff. Well-qualified staff need to be provided for portable library outreach services, and institutions receiving portable library services need to appoint or train staff to develop library services fully.

Portable libraries offer a promising means of encouraging reading through the provision of reading materials and opportunities. As such, they may serve as vehicles for literacy development. A previously deprived primary school and a prison population at

Nsukka have experienced the benefits of the program. I urge people to think creatively of ways to extend these opportunities to all people not served by a library and, therefore, to promote literacy development as a vital component of education for all.

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Mobilising Local Resources for Reading Promotion

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Zimbabwe

Mobilising local resources is an essential strategy for regaining the initiative in our development in Africa, specifically with regards to reading promotion. There are many examples of well-intentioned but misguided models of development, created externally and imposed on African communities. When the external attempts fail, the hope and patience of the people used for these experiments is eroded. Literacy programmes most often are effective when they are organised and implemented by communities themselves, and there are several reasons for this.

Sustainability. Harnessing and increasing local resources is the only guarantee of the sustainability of initiatives. By locating development initiatives in the needs centres of communities and harnessing local resources in support of solutions to these needs as perceived by the communities, development agencies are able to remain focused. Once people realise that they are the owners and the beneficiaries of development initiatives in their communities, they will demand that they be involved at all stages of planning, design, and implementation. The people will insist on transparency and accountability, and they will ensure that such initiatives remain faithful to the objectives and deliver the goods, instead of going off on tangents that bring nothing back to the community

Outsiders not necessary for designing the tools of local development. Real power lies with the people who design the tools for a project. It is through the actual experience of struggle, trial and error, and the incessant effort to change, be resourceful, and adapt to new and unexpected outcomes that new knowledge, methodologies, and skills are developed. One of the undeniable spin-offs of the aid industry for the so-called developed nations is the opportunity for their young people to test old theories and create new ones, which is gained through the control of the crucial processes of their aid interventions in the developing world.

Becoming the subjects rather than the objects of development. The actual exercise of identifying and mobilising local resources for development helps to heal the battered psyche and image of the "poor, helpless African" who has to be saved. African communities see what immense resources lie within themselves. From that knowledge is born a new courage to cut their garment according to the cloth they have.

Africans controlling their own transformation. Not of least importance is the sad truth that he who pays the piper calls the tune. Until African communities can create resources for the initial groundwork for transformation, there will continue to be irrelevant external interventions.

Breaking down competition for donor funding. One of the big advantages of strengthening the input of local resources and the parallel strengthening of networking amongst nongovernmental organizations working in communities is that the rivalry that often accompanies competition for donor funding breaks down, allowing for the pooling of resources and the maximisation of each other's contributions.

What Is Known About Literacy and Reading and Their Impact on the Life Chances and Personal Development of African People Today?

Educators in Africa have to look at the types of literacy, the content and methods of education, and the identity gap between reader and book and ask to what extent they are responding to the needs of the people and the society.

People who came of age before African independence know that at that time it was held as an article of faith that if a person learned to read and write, he or she could escape poverty, degradation, and futility. Post-independence and post-structural adjustment realities have exploded that myth. Many people who had acquired basic literacy have fallen back into low literacy, and neither basic literacy nor advanced literacy appears to have improved the life chances for the millions of unemployed African youth, rural women, and urban masses.

The 21st century is rapidly moving towards information-intensive societies and a global knowledge economy. Knowledge is power, and this knowledge is largely stored in conventional documents and electronic repositories. The ability to read is vital to access knowledge that is stored in print; therefore, if Africans want to be part of the new knowledge economy, they have to make a massive investment in improving literacy and numeracy throughout the continent because these are the bases upon which knowledge is built.

When we talk of local resources, what do we have in mind? Local resources comprise the following:

Human resources. Pools of human resources include all those who are literate—parents and grandparents, traditional leaders, "modern" leaders, professionals, university students, teachers, policy makers, business people, and the army of youth. Mobilising the youth can be an explosive strategy, specifically in getting them to listen to, record, and re-create the lives of their elders both in the rural and urban areas; read to and with children younger than themselves; and work alongside the rural populace in their everyday tasks, while at the same time teaching and learning, reading and writing.

The African diaspora. Africa's human resources include the millions of Africans working in the developed world who all have the hope of returning home one day. Their indirect support to development on the African continent through the money they send home testifies to their continued commitment to their home countries and people. Africans abroad can be mobilised into a powerful force for transformation on the continent.

Institutions. There are many local, regional, and pan-African institutions that can be mobilised and networked into a powerful engine for research and reading promotion in Africa. These institutions include national book councils, literacy organisations, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working on rural development, health issues, women's affairs, and youth activities; organizations of writers, illustrators, designers, publishers, booksellers, and printers; libraries, reading clubs, schools, universities, and churches; the government ministries of education, health, youth, women's affairs, culture of employment, and trade and finance; political parties and members of Parliament; and the corporate sector, comprising both local business and multinational companies operating locally.

Infrastructural resources. These resources include school buildings, libraries, civic centres, village meeting halls, recreation centres, churches, parks, beer halls and shabeens, people's homes and gardens; radio and television, newspapers, and local magazines; and library collections, millions of unpublished manuscripts, stories, histories, biographies, customs and traditions, individual and group experiences, and the collective memory of communities.

How Can Africans Mobilise Local Resources?

Mobilising local resources is a challenging task that involves hard work because mobilisation does not happen by itself and activities have to be targeted towards achieving specific outcomes. Some of the things Africans have to do include the following:

Taking a holistic approach. Africans have to look at whole communities and their life-styles, needs, and literacy aspirations as they perceive

them. They have to look at initiatives and agencies that either have come into those communities from outside or that have emerged within the communities themselves.

Gathering information. Africans have to map out how reading can help these communities to solve their day-to-day problems and increase their life chances. This information will determine both the methodology and the content of reading promotion strategies for that community. To date, there has been little financial support for information-gathering phases of locally controlled projects. Further-more, where funding for this stage has occurred, research findings have been confined to the archives of the sponsoring institutions, and the communities never hear of the project.

Networking. Another important task is the building of links, the sharing of information, and the cooperation between all the agencies and individuals working in the community.

Using a reading promotion project as a proactive service provider. In order to tap the vast reserves of knowledge, skills, and networks within a community, Africans need to find out from all other service providers how reading can help their participants and then need to tailor the reading initiative to make this assistance happen. A practical example would be when agricultural experts ask the reading promotion organisation working in the community to design materials and methods that would help them advise a community on the use of pesticides or water conservation. Subsequently, the community might approach the reading project with a request for reading material about a very different problem. In the end, what happens is a transformation of the way that books are perceived by a community.

Lobbying. Lobbying the government to unlock national and community resources is a strategy in mobilising local resources such as access to institutions and spaces under government control, especially underused classrooms. The government also can be lobbied on issues related to relieving taxation on books and on companies investing in education. Similarly, private businesses and multinational corporations operating within African countries need to be pressured to assume responsibility for developing the communities from which they draw both their labour force and the consumers of their products. Lobbying of international organisations and development partners by a networked group of local development NGOs in support of a shared system of development priorities can be another useful strategy for mobilising local resources.

Avoiding the waste of local resources by external agencies. When external agencies fund projects within a country or community, vast quantities of local resources—both human and material—are taken from the resource pool and mobilised for specific initiatives. Once there are several external agencies working on a variety of uncoordinated initiatives, chaos and tremendous waste of local resources result.

Mobilising the Wider Society

Small scale, bottom-up activity at the community level is the core of successful mobilisation, but it has to be supplemented by activity at the national and pan-African levels. At all levels, Africans have to look at mobilising people power, the private sector, and community resources.

Conclusion

The most important lesson the African people should have learned over the past decades of development initiatives is that they have to work with and be guided by the communities they serve and that small beginnings can make great endings. Lots of small, efficiently networked initiatives are likely to be more meaningful and more sustainable than big, glamorous schemes.

What Are Students in Botswana's High Schools Reading?

Arua E. Arua and Mary Lederer

Botswana

This paper describes a survey that the authors conducted to discover whether high school students in Botswana enjoy reading, what they read, and the conditions that lead to the development of good reading habits in the schools.

Background

Botswana, with a literacy rate of 73%, compares favourably with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, which has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world (Greaney, 1995). Omojuwa's description of the low literacy rate among students in Nigerian high schools is typical of many countries in the sub-Saharan region (1985, p.100). Secondary schools are now the focus of public attention, with concern being expressed about the growing incidence of an almost total lack of literacy among students.

Botswana has a well-organised literacy programme (see Legwaila, 1994), yet the present study found that the students sampled have not developed a reading interest. Teachers in the University of Botswana complain that their first-year students are not able to cope with basic reading, implying that the students did not develop adequate reading skills in school. This finding is similar to what Omojuwa (1985) reports about the poor literacy skills of Nigerian students, although the circumstances in Botswana and Nigeria are vastly different.

Aims of the Study

In view of these concerns about students' reading ability, the authors believe there is the need to examine the reading culture of high school students in Botswana. Other reasons for this study are the following:

- The 1990–1991 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Reading Literacy study of 32 countries places Botswana last in terms of total reading literacy achievement (Elley, 1995).
- Cassidy and Cassidy (2001) identify adolescent literacy as a topic needing discussion. Their view is in line with our observation that high school literacy, especially in Botswana, is neglected and the emphasis is being placed on beginning and primary school reading.

The study is not primarily concerned with whether students are able to read because it is a survey of people already in the university. The study is concerned with reading interests, reading habits, the teaching of reading skills, and students' views on how to improve their reading. The authors administered a reading questionnaire to a sample of first-year humanities students of the University of Botswana during the 2000–2001 academic year. The survey was to determine how the Department of English could help students cope with the first-year literature course and their reading schedules in other courses. In conducting this survey, it was fairly easy to build in questions that would reveal the students' high school reading history. It was found that most of the students in the sample graduated from 25 public senior secondary schools between 1997 and 1999. Therefore, the data used for the study are fairly recent.

Students' Reading Interests

The purpose of reading for 78% of the students in the sample was to pass their exams and gain general knowledge. Only 18% of the students surveyed read for pleasure. Uninteresting and difficult materials caused many students to dislike books. Yet motivation is important according to Elley's (1995) survey, which provided evidence that liking to read and having lots of time to read are two of the most important factors in the development of a good reading habit.

Students' Reading Habits

We found that the percentage of students reading frequently and occasionally is not as high as was expected, considering Botswana's relatively high literacy rate. We examined the students' frequency of reading two types of texts—prescribed texts and leisure materials.

Prescribed Texts

Texts are prescribed in four core subject areas, which ranked in descending order of the frequency at which they were read by the students are English, science, mathematics, and social science (see Table 1).

Leisure Texts

The materials the students read for pleasure are African, English, and American novels; local and foreign magazines; local and foreign newspapers; and comics. The students' responses regarding the frequency with which they read the materials are presented in Table 2 (see page 28).

The category *novel* was deliberately overspecified because we wanted to know exactly what the students were reading. Our study found that English novels are more frequently read than American or African novels. Kgafela and Biakolo (1998) report a similar trend. It is not clear why this group of Nigerian students reads more English than American novels, but there are three explanations for why students read fewer African novels. First, African novels are generally regarded as class texts to be read for examinations rather than for pleasure, and it appears that the texts are produced solely for use in schools. Second, African novels are not as readily available as non-African or Botswana texts; few African writers are producing books that children and teenagers can read for pleasure. Third, although many of the local books are produced in Setswana, students seem to prefer to read in English. (There is ongoing debate regarding the language of African literature, but this is not central to our discussion.)

When the students were asked to list some of the novels they had read in the high school, they listed many more texts from Botswana and the rest of Africa than from either England or the United States. This contradicts the frequency figures in Table 2. One explanation for this inconsistency may be that the African texts are used mainly in class, which makes it fairly easy for students to remember them.

Students' responses also indicate that they read foreign magazines more frequently than they read local ones. There is an avalanche of foreign magazines in Botswana, especially those from South Africa and the United States. There are hardly any local magazines in Botswana, yet 34% of the students sampled say they read local magazines frequently. The explanation for this data must be that they class some of the magazines produced in South Africa as local because the Botswana have a cultural affinity with the South Africans.

As for other reading materials, foreign newspapers are available, but they are expensive. Local

TABLE 1 Frequency of reading prescribed texts in high school

	Frequency (N = 77)				
Prescribed texts	**Frequently**	**Occasionally**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**No response**
English	34 (44%)	26 (34%)	6 (8%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)
Mathematics	18 (23%)	17 (22%)	17 (22%)	17 (22%)	1 (1%)
Science	20 (26%)	23 (30%)	19 (25%)	8 (10%)	0 (0%)
Social Science	6 (8%)	19 (25%)	26 (34%)	18 (23%)	0 (0%)

TABLE 2 Frequency of reading leisure materials by high school students

Leisure materials	Frequency (N = 77)				
	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	No response
Local novels	26 (34%)	25 (32%)	12 (13%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)
African novels	29 (38%)	30 (39%)	6 (8%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)
English novels	48 (62%)	15 (19%)	4 (5%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
American novels	22 (29%)	22 (29%)	12 (16%)	10 (12%)	1 (1%)
Local magazines	26 (34%)	27 (35%)	15 (19%)	1 (1%)	2 (3%)
Foreign magazines	34 (44%)	19 (25%)	14 (18%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
Local newspapers	44 (57%)	20 (26%)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)
Foreign newspapers	14 (18%)	23 (30%)	20 (26%)	12 (16%)	0 (0%)
Comics	24 (31%)	10 (12%)	23 (30%)	10 (12%)	1 (1%)
Others	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	18 (23%)

weekly newspapers are affordable, and high school students read these more frequently than foreign ones. Comics are the least frequently read texts, probably because they are not as well known as the other types of literature we have discussed.

The Teaching of Reading

Seventy-eight percent of the survey respondents indicated that they were taught how to read in high school. How were the students taught? Did the teaching have any effect?

Library Reading Classes for the Whole School

Many of the students report reading classes once a week for each class in the school library. They are taught how to acquire information from books and how to locate themes in novels. The students select books and read for a specified period, after which the teacher holds a session in which they discuss what the students read, whether they considered the material interesting, and so on.

The success of the library classes depends on two factors.

- The school must have an adequate number of books to choose from. The aim of the class is to make students choose and enjoy good books.
- Teachers must be interested in reading. Evidence exists that many who teach reading as part of their English classes do not read (Arua, 1992) and so are not able to model appropriate reading behaviours for their students.

The procedure of teaching reading is not as formalised in Botswana as it is in the United States, where teachers are trained in reading instruction. Methods of teaching reading are, however, more formalised in Botswana than in other parts of Africa, where hardly any efforts are made to teach students how to read apart from reading comprehension, which normally takes place as part of the English classes (Balogun, 1980).

Reading in the English Class

In Botswana, reading is taught in the English class. Many of the students in the survey indicate that they were taught skills including summarising, adjusting their reading speeds to the purpose and difficulty of the material they were reading, jotting down important points while reading, and recognising that reading is like obeying signs on the printed page.

How did the teachers teach the students to read for pleasure? They did so in the form of the following explicit directives:

- Devote more time to reading. Students were asked to read something each day.
- Make time for reading. Some teachers advise students to read for one hour but to take short breaks as needed during the hour. This introduces the notion of pacing one's reading.
- Read widely.

- Apply whatever is read in real-life situations.

Not all the students who were taught reading skills gained from the teaching. Some students simply said that the instruction did not help them. Other students said they failed their examinations in spite of their teachers' efforts or did not like the texts selected for them. Finally, some students cited poor teaching as the reason they did not do well in reading.

Students' Views on How to Improve Their Reading

Students who do not like to read or who did not gain anything from being taught how to read were asked how they could be helped to improve their reading. They provided suggestions on the following topics:

- Teaching literature in the high school: Students did not read literature in high school, but are expected to read the subject at the university. (A change of policy means that the subject is now available to all students at the lower levels of the high school.)
- Adequate techniques for teaching reading and literature: One respondent said a need exists to "create a more interactive English class about certain reading materials." Another student made the related comment, "If we all read in class, then reading will be fun."
- Availability of books: Some students indicated that "putting newspapers/novels in the library will be a big help." Generally, high schools find it difficult to buy newspapers for students, but the point the students are making is that they need to have sufficient materials to choose from.
- Motivation: Numerous student comments indicate that the students want to be given reading assignments that would enable them to do research, read more books, and read every week.

Conclusion

Problems exist regarding the lack of books in school libraries, the lack of students' motivation to read, poor teaching techniques, and, specific to Botswana, the absence of literature in the school curriculum. The students are reading and need encouragement to continue to do so. The formal existence of schoolwide reading classes in the high school is a measure of the seriousness with which the government of Botswana is pursuing the improvement of literacy. Finally, the existence of the Botswana literacy programme, which the authors think other countries should emulate, should ultimately ensure that students acquire reading skills and habits commensurate with the resources and effort the government is putting into the education of its citizenry.

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Cultivating a Reading Culture in a High School in Swaziland

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Swaziland

At Mbekeleweni High School in Swaziland, our library started operating in 1996 with some funds that the school was able to raise. That same year the school joined Fundza, a nongovernmental organization responsible for introducing libraries in schools, which donated books to our new library. We have not looked back since.

Unfortunately, the school has not been able to achieve its objective of cultivating the reading culture adequately for all students. Most students fail to acquire the desired culture of reading even after five years of exposure to the school library. Initially, as teacher-librarians, we attributed this to our limited stock of reading materials, but later we realized that the lack of materials was not the main cause. We decided to encourage more reading by requiring the students to write book reports at least once a month, but this exercise is very strenuous for the teachers because their teaching loads are not reduced just because they also are responsible for the library. Also, as head of a department, I find it difficult to monitor individual teachers to discover whether they do these exercises or not. What I usually do is to encourage the teachers to do the exercises by stressing the benefits of them.

Making students write book reports offers the following advantages:

- The exercise forces the students to read extensively. Sometimes they copy someone else's work, but that is easy for a teacher to detect.
- The teacher-librarian is exposed to a number of books without actually reading all of them. Therefore, if students report on the same book, a teacher-librarian can tell if a particular student has not completed the plot summary of that story.
- The exercise generally improves the students' language skills.
- The teacher-librarian also can note common grammatical errors in students' writing and prepare a lesson to help students on a particular grammatical topic.
- The students develop narrative skills as they tell the plot summary of a novel or report on factual information.
- It is hoped that the learners develop an interest in reading.

However, writing book reports was not entirely successful in promoting a reading culture in our high school. The majority of students do not have a reading culture at home, and at the primary level, many students fail to read extensively. Each class is allocated only 35 minutes per week for silent reading, and that is not enough. As a result, students are expected to read a lot during their own time, but we teacher-librarians have observed over a period of five years that many students do not read on their own. Most students take the books home and return them unread, although some students honestly report that they did not read the books and other students pretend that they did read them.

Because students did not necessarily become interested in reading books, we teacher-librarians decided to introduce newspapers, magazines, and educational games into the library. The newspapers and magazines did create some interest in

the students, and students now flock to the library to read these materials. Actually, any teacher-librarian has to be careful that the students thoroughly read the newspapers because the general tendency is that many students just scan through the newspaper or rush to the sports section, where the interest is more on checking the scores than on reading the details. What I usually do with my students is assign them to report what they read from the African news, world news, or world sports sections. Then, I prepare a short quiz (either written or oral) on current events on which the students will give their own opinions. This way, it is easy to identify students who just scan through the paper.

The students also are encouraged to read magazines for general information and to copy the writing style used when they narrate a story. We teacher-librarians hope this exercise helps them in composition writing. It has been difficult to observe whether or not composition writing improves for all students, but we have noted a slight improvement with serious readers.

The educational games that have been introduced include Scrabble, Monopoly, chess, and card games. Scrabble develops students' vocabulary, Monopoly and chess develop their cognitive skills, and the cards (very popular with students) assist them both in cognitive and mathematical skills. Students play these games during the lunch hour and sometimes during the library period. There are some problems with the educational games. Seemingly, the games are attractive to the students who are tempted to steal some of the tiny pieces, perhaps to play at home. We have lost a number of pieces in the chess and Monopoly games. Therefore, we had to buy another Monopoly game, but we could not buy another chess set because of the expense.

One may wonder how we at Mbekelweni High School fund all these games. Each student is changed a token fee for the library fund and for materials for English class. The library fund is used to buy library books to replenish the library stock. The English fee, on the other hand, is used to buy newspapers, magazines, some games, and to rent educational videocassettes.

To facilitate library activities, the Health/Library Club has been formed. It is a health club in that the student members are involved in the awareness campaign against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other health issues, including drug or physical abuse and the general health of the students themselves. It is a library club in that the students are encouraged to read a lot about specific topics and go to other information centers, such as the national library and the British council, to do research. This club exposes the students to other libraries and develops their library skills. To be honest, we only send the best students to the libraries outside the school, and they share their information with the rest of the students. This acts as an incentive to the other students.

The Health/Library Club encourages the students to

- write articles on health to be published in the school magazines;
- do research on specific topics and present it to other students;
- write awareness slogans and put them in the classrooms;
- watch educational videos, especially on health issues with emphasis on HIV/AIDS;
- arrange visits to FLAS (the Family Life Association of Swaziland) and SWAGAA (the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse);
- work closely with SHAPE (Schools Health and Population Education); and
- to respond to any request in the *Times of Swaziland* for articles on specific topics.

However, it is very disappointing to note that even though there are so many activities to help students improve their reading skills, even after five years in school, some of them fail to read without being pushed. To write a book report, students often will choose a very small book to read quickly, and they will scribble the report for the teacher. Unfortunately, some teachers do not discourage such disappointing attempts at writing, although we all continue to encourage them to read extensively. This experience has prompted me to observe why students fail to acquire the culture of reading even though we teachers feel we are doing the best we can. I have observed that most of the students come from a nonreading culture both at

home and at the primary school level. By the time we begin to teach them library skills and introduce them to extensive reading in high school, it is rather late.

Therefore, this year I began working with the primary schools in our area to introduce libraries so the pupils acquire these skills at a young age. One primary school, for example, now has a library and has received a donation through Fundza. I have encouraged the head teachers of these schools to budget for a library fund in the next year to buy library books. The head teachers also have shown interest in the introduction of libraries and have given me a lot of support so far.

I am, therefore, hoping that once the learners are exposed to the reading culture from primary schools, we will be able to achieve our goal of cultivating this culture in our high school students. We also should not forget to include the students' parents. They should be aware of the importance of reading, especially because a number of Swazis are now exposed to education. I often discuss this issue with parents during open days, when a student has to pay for a lost book, and when they collect the reports. Many parents have shown a positive interest towards reading.

The Introduction to Information Technology course offered by the school also seems to have a positive effect on the students because it is an opportunity for me to point out to them that computers do not read for them. I stress that it is generally impossible for a person to use a computer if he or she cannot read. Therefore, for one to succeed in the information technology field, he or she must be able to read quickly with understanding, which means it is imperative for students to develop a passion for reading.

Inculcating a reading culture in a school is not a very easy task because not only do the students have little interest in reading but also the teachers are not keen to read extensively. Teachers tend to concentrate on delivering what is in the syllabus and nothing more. As a teacher-librarian in the Mbekelweni High School, it has been my duty to sensitize the teachers on the importance of extensive reading. To encourage the teachers to read extensively, I consult them to help in selecting library material, which is a diplomatic way of getting them to use the books once they are bought. I also request the teachers to visit the library to read so they will be role models to the students. I also encourage teachers to give students assignments that require them to do research in the library.

It is heartbreaking, though, to report that very few teachers respond positively to these requests because they claim it is a very strenuous exercise on top of their daily tasks. The teacher-librarian then has to try and change this attitude. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to state that some teachers are really going out of their way to improve the reading culture in the school. Two more teachers have been trained to manage the library to improve the library services. Their training has made them more enthusiastic in their endeavor to inculcate a reading culture in the school. (In addtion, once a year, Form II students are taken to tour the national library and are educated by the librarians there. This experience changes their attitude towards the library, and many of them join the national library.)

Extensive reading has resulted in a slight improvement in the examination results from 1996, especially in the area of English Language. Before 1996, the results were not encouraging at all. At the national level, the results may not look good, but to our school it is comforting to see some improvement no matter how tiny it may be. It is especially encouraging to see some of our students absorbed by tertiary institutions. I am confident to state that those who made it to higher institutions did so partly because of the library and reading skills they acquired from Mbekelweni High School.

Family Basic Education (FABE) in Uganda

Simon Kisira

Uganda

Literacy and Basic Education (LABE) is an indigenous national-level organisation in Uganda that works with and through existing local government structures and civil society organisations to offer literacy and basic education services. For five years, LABE has been running general literacy programmes. An evaluation of the LABE project (Brown & Kwesiga, 2000) revealed that many adult literacy learners (parents and guardians) are keen to acquire skills that will enable them to support their children better with their schoolwork. The evaluation findings came at a time when the Ugandan government ministry in charge of adult literacy was challenged with demonstrating a clear link between parents' acquisition of literacy skills and children's school academic performance. The introduction of universal primary education had resulted in an influx in formal school enrollment; however, there also was an emerging negative impact on the quality of education provision because of the rapidly increased ratio of pupils to teachers from 45:1 to 150:1 (or, in many cases, more than 200:1). Therefore, the reduction of individual pupil-teacher interaction also was likely to affect the children's educational performance. From this background, the Family Basic Education (FABE) project was developed.

The Family Basic Education Project Goal

FABE's goal is improved educational performance of primary school pupils through increased and improved parental educational support. FABE has short-, medium-, and long-term objectives to work toward achieving this goal.

Short-Term Objectives

- Strengthen parents' abilities to support their children's learning by providing after-school adult classes in literacy, numeracy, and parenting skills.
- Increase and improve communication links between parents and teachers for increased information flow on children's educational issues.
- Increase parent-child educational interaction for shared learning that will benefit both parents and children.

Medium-Term Objective

- Support parents to participate more actively and effectively in school management activities, influencing learning content and processes at school.

Long-Term Objectives

- Influence the national primary school curriculum to have indigenous knowledge and practices as an integral part.
- Lobby the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Services (the ministry in charge of adult literacy) to replicate the project in other parts of the country through primary schools and adult learning centres.

Project Activities

Sensitisation

FABE organises meetings with parents, community leaders, schoolteachers, and other community

members on their financial, technical, material, and moral roles in children's education.

Adult classes

Classes are organised for parents with low or no literacy skills, who have children in P1 and P2 classes, to enhance their literacy and parenting skills. Parents with little or no literacy skills enroll for literacy classes, running three times a week for two hours. Adult literacy classes, aimed at equipping parents with basic literacy and numeracy skills in the local language, are conducted in P1 and P2 classrooms in the afternoons. This enables parents to be familiar with the charts, models, cards, games, "leisure corner," and so on that are used in children's learning and enables them to develop similar materials in the language at home. (The national education policy is to have instruction in P1–P4 classes conducted in the local language with English as just one of the subjects.)

These literacy classes for parents derive their content from lower primary school curricula but are tailored for adult learning. In this way, parents are equipped with some skills and knowledge and have a fairly good idea of what is taught in the school. Hence, they are in a better position to help their children with homework exercises.

Adult classes are cofacilitated by adult literacy instructors and P1 or P2 schoolteachers. Along with offering remedial support to individual parents, schoolteachers share with parents what they have planned to teach over the subsequent days and discuss the areas of support that parents are required to offer. Parents are encouraged to relate their indigenous knowledge and practices with the children's work in all the subjects (e.g., science, the local language, social science, and number work).

Joint learning sessions

Joint sessions are held monthly in which both the parents and their children take part. Schoolteachers develop homework for pupils about which the parents in the classes are expected to have their own views and ideas. During the joint learning sessions, samples of such homework exercises are given, and both the literacy instructors and the schoolteachers offer support to the parent-child teams.

School activities

FABE organises school activities, such as open days and parent-teacher association meetings, which promote interaction between parents, schoolteachers, and pupils on issues pertaining to the children's educational progress. Other activities during such school events include outdoor games played together by children, parents, and schoolteachers.

Production of learning materials

P1 and P2 schoolteachers and FABE literacy instructors develop flannel boards, reading booklets, card games, and other learning charts, and a few parents and pupils pretest the materials. The materials are distributed to parents and children participating in FABE to encourage joint educational activities between these groups. Other writing materials, such as slates, also are purchased and distributed to the parents for this purpose.

Training of school teachers and adult literacy instructors

Literacy instructors are exposed to teaching and learning methods and principles for children in addition to their training in adult literacy skills. In order to strengthen the link between adult learning in parent classes and children's learning in school, adult literacy instructors double as teaching assistants in school classrooms. In this way, they are able to follow what is taught in the lower primary school classes held in the morning and structure adult learning content that ties in closely with school learning content. Because the schoolteachers are fairly well trained with two years of instruction, they are paired with adult literacy instructors in adult and/or parent classes to mentor them in teaching methods, developing lesson plans, and organising shared parent-child learning activities.

Programme monitoring and assessment criteria

In addition to the homework exercises given to pupils, FABE assesses the quality and level of support that parents offer to their children's education. Prizes are awarded to those parents who have shown significant improvement in the educational support they offer to their children.

Conclusion

After one year, there has been a noticeable improvement in the academic performance of children whose parents participated in the FABE adult classes. This improvement is largely in number work and language skills. The percentage of parents who report that they make time at least once a week to sit with their children and help them with their homework exercises rose from 30% to 80% during the year. The parents also testified to checking their children's books and helping them make corrections on their assignments at least once every two weeks. The percentage of parents who reported that they play educational games, mainly number recognition games, rose from 15% to 75% during the year. We found that many parents seem to be more comfortable offering educational support in numeracy than in other subjects.

All the respondents reported that they now gather local materials such as bottle tops for counting and old cardboard to use as learning materials for their children. The percentage of parents who reported that they take time to tell educational stories to their children increased from 20% to 80% during the year. There also was a dramatic increase in the percentage of parents who said they visit the school informally and talk to their children's teachers about their children's educational progress at least once a month. Before joining the FABE project, only 11% had been making informal visits to schools for similar discussions, and this figure rose to 80% during the year. There was a significant increase in the number of parents who reported that they attend school activities—from 37% to 96%. However, the percentage of parents who now send written communication to school teachers concerning their children's learning progress or challenges is still very low, having risen from 8% to only 17%.

From the above results, it may be inferred that a positive interaction among parents, teachers, and pupils is emerging to some extent. It may be too early to say, but this improvement seems to point to effective parental and teacher educational support and, ultimately, to the improved educational performance of the target pupils.

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Developing and Promoting Lifetime Reading Habits in Kenya: The Reading Tent Project and Njoro Reading Facility

Margaret Makenzi

Kenya

Reading is one of the most rewarding pursuits in life and an art that is central to human development. Through reading, individuals develop insights of a world beyond the life that they actually live. However, if the apparent decline in primary school participation rates in many sub-Saharan African countries continues unabated, it will tend to increase the number of illiterate people in future years. Such an eventuality is bound to aggravate the unfavourable socio-economic situations in Africa, thus impeding development. This situation calls for the execution of very innovative and urgent measures in order to avert the impending dire consequences.

In a world in which the television has taken over the lives of so many children, it is our duty to tell children the importance of the written word. In the end, children should be able to read books both for information and enjoyment. The enthusiasm, interest, and love for books should be built up in children from tender ages. Ben Carson observes that those who are able to read can learn just about anything they want to know and that the doors of the world are open to people who can read (1996, p. 39).

The Reading Tent Project in Njoro, Kenya

The Reading Tent project is a joint venture between Egerton University based in Njoro, Kenya and the Rockefeller Foundation. It is an outreach program that aims at promoting reading and instilling a lifetime reading culture among the youth in Kenya. Because it was not possible to build libraries in each of the schools, the idea of a reading tent was seen to be most suitable. Since 1999, the Rockefeller Foundation has supported the project through two grants. The activities of the entire project are managed and executed by a coordinator—who also is the principle researcher—two facilitators, and six project staff. The concerted organisational and administrative competence of these people, coupled with some practical know-how in librarianship, child psychology, information technology, and training, have made the whole endeavour a reality.

The Reading Tent project was created out of the realisation that

- reading habits, skills, and culture need to be inculcated at an early age and carried on throughout an individual's life;
- reading is a major key to national development and individual growth;
- reading is the basis of success in all other forms of learning and communication; and
- reading is one of the most rewarding pursuits in life and an art that is central to human development.

The project's main objectives are to

- develop and promote a reading culture,
- create awareness of the power of reading,
- encourage schools to set aside time for leisure reading,
- improve reading skills,

- offer a wide variety of reading materials, and
- encourage pupils, teachers, and parents.

Scope of the Reading Tent Project's Coverage

Given the combined constraints of funds, facilities, and staff, the Reading Tent project limited its activities to 10 schools within the Njoro Division. To be able to closely monitor the impact of the project on the reading habits of pupils over a number of years, project staff selected a control group of children in classes 2 and 3 in each of the schools. Now, the pupils are 9 to 11 years of age and in classes 3 and 4. The project also has aggressively promoted and created awareness on the importance of reading in 15 other schools and works closely with them, although their activities are not monitored. All schools participating in the project are located within a 10-kilometre radius around Egerton University, mainly for the purpose of easy accessibility.

The Reading Tent project has a multifaceted approach towards the achievement of its objectives. These approaches are as follows:

- a project library
- classroom reading and information technology (IT) skills lessons
- mobile reading tent events
- holiday reading and/or IT camps

The collection of feedback is normally done through library reading records and fun quizzes for pupils, written comments by pupils, and designated monitoring forms and questionnaires for pupils and teachers from each of the schools. The project staff then consolidate the data and carefully analyse it in accordance with the set objectives. The ensuing information goes a long way to assist in the improvement of services offered in the project and to evaluate the impact of the entire project on the participating children's academic well-being. The outcome of these endeavours are presented in periodic and annual reports.

Project Library and Information Techonology Lab

The Reading Tent project has set up a library with a wide variety of storybooks, a reference section, and an IT lab. The main functions of the library are

- to create a conducive and suitable environment for continuous reading,
- to provide a variety of storybooks,
- to instil proper reading skills,
- to expose children to the computer and emerging IT aspects as a partner to reading, and
- to train children to acquire proper library and information-seeking skills.

The project library and IT lab are located on the main campus of Egerton University. The library has more than 11,000 volumes of reading materials that are carefully selected to capture the interest of young children. At the library, the children are exposed to proper library usage skills and begin to appreciate the long reading road ahead of them. The project staff and teachers help the children select books, read, and solve word problems. At the library, the children also have interactive teaching and learning IT sessions made available to them.

The IT lab is equipped with a total of eight computers in a networked environment, together with access to e-mail and the Internet. There are more than 20 educational CD-ROMs that offer the following educational benefits to the children:

- word recognition and pronunciation development
- reading comprehension development
- a love of reading
- vocabulary building
- a match to children's reading levels
- independent reading encouragement
- fun-filled skill building activities
- computer literacy through educational games

The Reading Tent project also conducts vocational reading and IT camps for all the children from the community and surrounding areas. The main purpose of the camps is to sustain the reading activities for the children while schools are closed for holidays.

Reading and IT Lessons in Schools

Initially, the Reading Tent project carried out campaigns to create awareness of the importance of

reading. At the end of the campaigns, the schools that had been approached agreed to set aside one hour per week for students' leisure reading. Starting from the year 2001, the schools have set aside whole afternoons once a week for reading and IT sessions. The Reading Tent project has provided an average of 500 storybooks to each of the primary schools for use during reading lessons.

The schools lacked the skill and experience that was much needed to handle the wide variety of books and to capture the interest of the children by making the reading lesson exciting. Therefore, the Reading Tent project staff organised seminars and workshops to instruct the school administrators and teachers in basic skills, which included

- encouraging children in their reading attempts as a necessity for their steady progress;
- creating a conducive environment in which children can access a wide variety of reading materials and enjoy reading;
- creating multiple opportunities for continued and sustained reading practice in a variety of formats (e.g., choral, individual, and partner reading and how to vary the lesson to include activities like retelling stories that have been read and dramatising them);
- linking reading to writing activities;
- helping in the selection of reading materials for the children that depend on each child's level of reading ability;
- giving children opportunities to express themselves confidently and to achieve the desired level of competence; and
- creating awareness that computers are tools that can be used to instil reading skills, even if learning seems like play.

Mobile Reading Tent Events

Mobile reading tent events are an integral part of the project, and the project staff organises them every month. Tents are pitched on Saturdays in different schools each month. The activities for these events include reading, drawing, painting, reciting poems, telling stories, paper shape cutting, clay modelling, and participating in the IT and educational games corner. During the reading tent events, children are divided into groups and rotate systematically through the activities scheduled for the day. All the previously mentioned activities are carried out during the morning session. The main activities for the afternoon session are a reading competition and prize-giving. The attributes of good reading during this session are audibility, proper pronunciation, fluency, confidence, and punctuation awareness.

Njoro Reading Facility

The Njoro reading facility was organised to compliment the main objective of the Reading Tent project—promoting and developing a reading culture. Whereas the Reading Tent project focuses on children, the reading facility is open to the general public as a campaign to promote reading.

The Njoro reading facility came into existence in July 2000 as a result of a grant from the International Reading Association. Under the Developing Country Literacy Project Support Fund, the Association provided a grant that enabled the facility to purchase reading materials. The main users of the facility are the rural community of Njoro, school children, youth, college students, and workers. Currently, the facility has a membership of 73 people. A fee equivalent to US$1 is charged for the registration and US$3 for annual membership, respectively. It has not been possible for members of the Njoro community to raise this amount due to the poor economic situation in this area, which leaves the burden of running the facility to the three directors who have to raise money every month to pay for rent, security, and staff.

Project Impact and Achievements

The activities of the Reading Tent project are part of a long-term process to achieve a lifetime reading culture in Kenya. Nevertheless, considerable achievement has been made so far in realising the project's objectives. Because of the introduction of library lessons in schools that are directly participating in the project, many more schools in the division have picked up the idea and set aside time for reading. Through the project, a wide variety of reading materials have been provided to schools, making it possible for children to read who initially lacked reading materials. The children have shown great interest in the books and the supporting ac-

tivities, which are geared towards promoting an interest in reading. The books, although initially meant for only classes 2, 3, and 4, are being read by entire school populations.

The establishment of the project library and IT lab has made it possible for children to acquire basic library skills and to have an opportunity for continued reading. Through the mobile reading tent events, teachers and pupils have started to appreciate that all academic activities revolve around reading. However, the Reading Tent project has had to contend with a number of constraints that include

- poor support from parents, the majority of whom have low levels of literacy themselves;
- pressure on teachers to ensure that their classes excel academically;
- lack of a project vehicle; and
- lack of adequate funds.

It is quite evident that most of the objectives formulated at the onset of the project have been realised and the concept has been well grounded in the targeted schools. However, it would take quite a bit of time and continuous sustained exposure to the facilities currently available for the project's impact on individual children to be significantly noted.

New Directions

The Reading Tent project's first phase, which ended in April 2001, focused on creating awareness through seminars, workshops, and campaigns amongst pupils, teachers, and parents. The first phase initiated the project in schools through the establishment of school libraries, creating library lessons, and organising monthly reading tent events. In subsequent phases, the project intends to work towards encouraging teachers, parents, and pupils to own the project through capacity building. In addition to enhancing the objectives of the Reading Tent project in general, the following objectives still need to be addressed in the future:

- strengthening the library and IT lessons, school libraries, and the project library
- diversifying the reading tent events for variety (e.g., incorporating new activities while removing others, based on the children's levels of understanding and progress)
- training teachers in the management and sustainability of Reading Tent Project activities
- developing a manual to be used as a reference tool in schools
- involving the community more actively in project activities
- involving parents in the reading programmes of their children, both in school and at home

The project has a national agenda—to replicate both its activities and those of the Njoro Reading Facility to the rural areas all over Kenya. This expansion will create extensive awareness of the importance of reading.

Conclusion

Through the positive impact of literacy, individuals can develop and improve themselves. However, poor reading habits should be blamed not only on poverty but also on the lack of enthusiasm, interest, time, love for books, and a reading culture.

Early childhood is an important time for learning and developing proper reading skills and a reading culture because children are more free and willing to learn at an early age. As they grow older, the demands on their time increase. Therefore, children should be exposed to more reading materials and encouraged to read for leisure. This reading will prepare them to shift smoothly to new levels of more difficult reading materials where there is a lot of silent reading that involves comprehension and study skills. These skills should be consciously inculcated from young ages because children's steady progress in reading depends to a considerable extent upon experiences in their formative years.

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Masifunde Sonke: Building a Nation of Readers in South Africa

Mandla Maseko and Beulah Thumbadoo

South Africa

Reading in South Africa, and perhaps in many other parts of the world, is synonymous with studying and is mainly perceived as an academic exercise or obligation. The pleasure of reading has assumed the status of an academic exercise, perceived narrowly as an ingredient of academic success and a painful habit for those who are averse to formal education. In working to alleviate this situation, a group of reading specialists and reading lobbyists felt that the time had come for South Africans to realise the importance and value of reading.

The Everyone's Reading in Africa (ERA) initiative ended the last millennium by calling for a decade of reading in South Africa. The result was a two-day conference on reading in Johannesburg at the end of February 2000. At the conference, interest groups in the reading sector, including the South African Director General of Education, Mr. Thami Mseleku, agreed that reading in South Africa needed a national campaign. ERA forwarded the conference report to the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, who subsequently called a meeting with the sector and announced his intention to declare 2001 a focus year on reading in South Africa. On December 8, 2000, Minister Asmal launched the Year of the Reader under the banner of *Masifunde Sonke*, which is Zulu for "Let's All Read Together."

Year of the Reader Campaign

The Year of the Reader campaign is considered to be an advocacy year to build momentum and stimulate reading interests amongst South Africans. The organisers of the campaign are consciously aware of the fact that a reading and book-buying culture cannot be built in one year. The aim of the campaign in 2001 is to get people reading and talking about reading to initiate work towards building a nation of readers. Our plan is to continue the advocacy to sustain the momentum built in 2001. Masifunde Sonke has managed to promote and brand the importance of reading through the Year of the Reader campaign.

Masifunde Sonke is a joint programme of civil society and the South African Ministry of Education to promote and encourage the values and importance of reading in schools, homes, libraries, and the workplace and the relevance of reading skills in the modern society. The programme's main objectives are

- to achieve a total national consciousness of the value and benefits of reading;
- to engage all in the "reading chain"—writers, illustrators, publishers, printers, booksellers, teachers, and librarians—in support of the mission of the programme;
- to engage the corporate sector, civil society, churches, and community-based organisations to support and participate actively in the programme; and
- to mobilise investment into a reading promotion initiative of such value to all stakeholders that it will grow and continue to serve far beyond 2001.

Masifunde Sonke has managed to promote and brand the importance of reading through supporting reading initiatives during 2001. We project staff

engage ourselves in this rigorous reading promotion to build a culture of reading in South Africa for longlife learning and development. The widespread interest and participation in the programme from small community-based organisations and libraries bears testimony to the quest for an organised reading promotion programme at the national level to serve as a hub for reading information, activities, and development. A strong need exists for financial and developmental support for small, yet valuable, reading promotion organisations and institutions that are overshadowed by recognised and dominant reading promotion organisations in our country.

Masifunde Sonke has identified the following problems that need to be addressed:

- the declining number of readers in South Africa
- the dwindling book-buying culture and culture of reading in general
- the lack of a coordinated and regularly updated database on reading organisations, reading sponsorship, and reading project development
- a dearth of research to supply funders with comprehensive profiles of reading organisations that need support
- poor markets for South African reading materials written in African languages
- no overall book policy to regulate and monitor the book industry

Masifunde Sonke strives to expand the reading definition because reading is too strongly associated with academic obligations. Reading is a literacy skill needed to enable everybody to function in the literate environment and situations. For instance, people who do not have reading skills are unable to read road signs and directions, interact with automatic teller machines, and read medicine instructions.

We programme staff aim to unite all reading professionals, stakeholders, and role players as part of the broader reading community in South Africa. To this end, we are glad to be taking these first steps towards working with international reading promotion associations. To achieve this unity, Masifunde Sonke uses all the available resources—schools, public libraries, religious institutions, publishers, the business sector, governmental and community-based organisations, and all those involved in the promotion of reading. All are encouraged to work together to build a nation of readers. By the end of the campaign, it is hoped every individual will pick up a book and say, "I can read for fun and for pleasure."

The programme's mandate is not only to organise reading promotional events but also to offer itself as a networking centre for reading activities organised separately by reading-related and other organisations. We like to support and encourage South Africans to initiate reading projects, events, functions, and other reading activities. The campaign office supports the initiators and organisers through the provision of promotional materials such as posters, caps, T-shirts, bumper stickers, bookmarks, and brochures.

Programme Success in 2001

In 2001, which was our awareness year, we confined ourselves to brand building, marketing, and promotion. After the grand launch, we embarked on a lobbying process to bring on board all necessary and relevant stakeholders. The main objective was to promote the campaign logo. Our logo is currently used, in many forms, for various reading activities.

We also have been encouraging stakeholders to focus their attention on promoting the value and benefit of reading in their families, institutions, organisations, communities, and schools. The following are some examples of reading promotional work that also has supported the broad intentions of Masifunde Sonke:

- South Africans celebrated World Book Day under the umbrella of Masifunde Sonke
- the South African Broadcasting Corporation commissioned a provincial reading road show called Liberation through Reading in support of the Year of the Reader
- the libraries celebrated Library Week under the Year of the Reader slogan

- schools participated in the Readathon project by READ Education Trust
- the Everyone's Reading in Africa initiative produced a reading song
- the University of South Africa launched a campus reading campaign
- the Technikon, SA launched a campus reading campaign
- Simba SA and Maskew Miller Longman ran road shows in rural schools
- the programme recently launched the National Reading road show called *Nozincwadi* (Mother of Books)

These initiatives testify that South Africa is buzzing with reading initiatives. The momentum is growing daily as we spread the word.

Future Plans

At the time of the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading for All, we were 10 months into the Year of the Reader and the pages had not turned as easily or rapidly as we had imagined they would. Our concern is that although the campaign has become known and understood by some people—organisations and businesses directly involved in the reading sector—this recognition is by no means good enough. Our wish is to begin to attract ordinary South Africans, young and old, to understand and practice the objectives of our campaign. Our real desire is that Masifunde Sonke can unite all reading professionals, stakeholder bodies, and role players as part of the broader reading community. To this end, we look forward to forming a South African Reading Development Trust to galvanise funds and disburse them accordingly to viable reading projects and necessary advocacy campaigns. We also are hoping to build a nation of readers, which will contribute positively to the African Renaissance being spearheaded by South African President, Thabo Mbeki.

Conclusion

We often refer to our view of collective action for a united assault on the problems of aliteracy and low literacy in symbolic terms as a train making its way across South Africa and the African continent. All the carriages of the reading train are being hooked up, but the number of carriages the train has is up to any interested party. It will be disastrous if too few people are aware that the train is coming around and, therefore, only a few get on board. Masifunde Sonke, although still not as strong and vital as we would like it to be and intend it to become, is our best vehicle yet to move reading forward in South Africa.

Reviving a Culture of Teaching and Learning Through Parents and Schools Learning Clubs

Letta Mashishi

South Africa

The Minister of Education in South Africa has set nine priorities that could help lead to quality education in South Africa. One priority is to "break the back of illiteracy among adults and youth in five years" (Asmal, 1999). At the same time, the government is faced with the mammoth task of working towards the revival of a teaching and learning culture that is desperately needed in many schools in African townships and villages (Chisolm & Vally, 1996). With regard to the problem of schools not operating maximally, the National Department of Education has, among other things, solicited the assistance of parents. The argument presented in this paper is that a family literacy model of parental involvement is more likely to increase the chances of success of the National Department of Education's efforts.

Parental Involvement Initiatives in South Africa

A critical factor that is likely to influence the effectiveness of parental involvement initiatives is the conception of parental involvement that parents and educators have. The parents' extent and level of involvement will depend in part on how individual parents construct and conceptualise their roles in the teaching and learning process (Garcia, 1988). How both parents and educators conceptualise the parent-educator relationship also affects the nature and extent of parents' involvement. Although there could be consensus among parents and educators with respect to the need to promote the academic development of children, translating this consensus into a mutually positive working relationship could pose problems. In a survey involving 443 parents of primary school children in Soweto, South Africa, it was found that the majority of the parents saw their role as that of consolidating classroom learning and monitoring their children's progress. A disturbing finding that emerged from that research is that only 34% of the parents indicated that they contacted the school to find out about their children's progress (Mashishi, 1994).

Conceptions of parental involvement also are likely to be influenced by the perceptions that parental involvement practitioners have of the families with whom they work. Those practitioners following a deficit model of the family will tend to regard the family as deficient in skills, attitudes, knowledge, and the general wherewithal to promote learning (Taylor, 1993, 1997; Auerbach, 1989). The family literacy approach to parental involvement attempts to overcome any negative stereotype of the family and emphasises that parental involvement practitioners should show sensitivity to the cultures, practises, and knowledge of the communities in which they work (Auerbach, 1989; Taylor, 1993, 1997; Topping & Wolfendale, 1996). The family then becomes the point of departure in this literacy approach. As Nutbrown and Hannon (1997) write, "it is the family which is the focus of the educational activity rather than the child, the parent-child relationship, or the parent alone" (p. 11).

Topping and Wolfendale (1996) stress that "family literacy is about education, not school" (p. 26) and they list the following items as some of the main goals of family literacy:

1. Family Literacy targets gains in literacy competence, motivation, and self-image for all participants—child and adult.
2. Family Literacy seeks to enable family members to help each other to achieve such gains—both inter-generationally and intra-generationally—now and in the future.
3. Family Literacy values the existing culture and competencies of family members and builds on these.
4. Family Literacy targets gains in literacy competence in relation to the needs, uses, objectives, and values of all participants, not just those of the school system. Family Literacy seeks to link the needs and competencies of the home/community and school environments so far as possible.
5. Family Literacy seeks to offer equal opportunities and access to all members of all families of all kinds. (p. 26)

The family literacy approach is particularly appropriate in South Africa because of the ravages inflicted by the apartheid system on the African family. At a general level, the apartheid system turned Africans into a disenfranchised and impoverished group. With regard to this paper, the following aspects of the impact of apartheid on the African family need to be stressed:

- The system of migratory labour resulted in many parents being absent from their families for long periods of the year during which they resided either in single-sex hostels for men or in single rooms for women working as domestics. The parenting function of such parents was, therefore, adversely affected (Lacey, 1981).
- The culture of teaching and learning in most schools in African communities was eroded mainly because of an alienating system of education whose prime motivation was to attempt to keep Africans, in Verwoerd's words, as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (cited in Kallaway, 1984, p. 176).
- The dislocation of the African way of life through forced relocation of entire communities led to the destruction of the traditional mode of life that nurtured the oral performance culture that was one of the most important elements in the cultural and social life of the African people (Hofmeyr, 1993).
- The resultant strains and stresses occasioned by the three factors mentioned above have created a fertile ground for the "colonization" of the African family by "experts" from "remedial educators" to "specialists" on parenting issues. Many so-called experts tend to see pathologies where none exist. For example, one of the parents in the PASLC programme reported that her son had been declared a slow learner by his teachers. After joining the programme, she and her son worked on the activities that were discussed in the workshops. She reported that her son was awarded a prize for being among the top three students in the physical science end-of-the-year examination in 1999.

The need for parental involvement practitioners in South Africa to be sensitive to these contextual factors can, therefore, not be overemphasised.

A Brief History of Parents and Schools Learning Clubs (PASLC) Programme

The Parents and Schools Learning Clubs (PASLC) programme was established in 1990 following a request by parents of Nkholi primary school in Pimville, Soweto, that I should assist them with strategies that would enable them to help their children to learn. At the time, I was working on language across the curriculum methodologies with the staff of the school and was also a member of the parent body. After the initial parents' workshops, I received requests for similar parent workshops from other schools. At the height of its operation, PASLC programme staff worked in 30 schools, and between 1994 and 1996, PASLC ran fortnightly workshops for over 1000 parents at 10 schools. In 1996, PASLC received the Presidential Award in the category of Early Childhood Development in recognition of its work toward reviving the teaching and learning culture in African schools.

Two of PASLC's main objectives are germane to the thrust of this paper:

- to encourage family members to share their experiences and cultural knowledge with their children and other members of the family and to use such experiences and cultural knowledge as a basis for the development of literacy in the family
- to involve families in the effort to entrench reading, writing, and learning as part and parcel of the culture of African homes

The PASLC Curriculum

The PASLC curriculum evolved over a period of 10 years, and the model that the curriculum design has followed is that of collaborative action research in which the knowledge, experiences, and concerns of the parents are allowed to interface with the knowledge, experiences, and concerns of the programme staff. The synergies from this kind of interaction have resulted in high levels of meaningful participation both in the workshops and in the homes of participating families.

Some critical episodes stand out as milestones in the road travelled during the development of the PASLC curriculum.

A shift from the unidirectional approach (Auerbach, 1989) to a participatory approach. At the beginning, PASLC workshops mainly followed a transmission model in which the PASLC staff introduced parents to specific story reading techniques. Participa-tion was minimal because many parents could neither read nor write. At one of our participating schools, for example, 80 % of the parents could not read or write. Because of this situation, programme staff realized the need to have the PASLC materials translated into different African languages. During these translation sessions, it emerged that older parents knew more about the lexis and syntax of specific languages than the programme staff knew and that the parents were willing to share their knowledge. Two important developments occurred because of this: First, there were high levels of participation during the workshops, and second, a redefinition of roles took place and parents and programme staff simultaneously became educators and learners.

Parents' realisation of their own strengths. The debates around vocabulary and syntax made parents aware of the gaps in the cultural knowledge of both programme staff and younger members of the parent body. A number of parents expressed concern that they had identified similar gaps in the cultural knowledge of their own children. It was decided that parents could help address this problem by contributing information about those cultural aspects that played an important role in African traditional ways of life. Parents began sharing information on family praise poems, family totems, and family trees; traditional recipes, forms of recreation, and musical instruments; and other cultural artefacts that form part of their family histories.

Parents' articulation of their own concerns. During the winter months, there often are reports in South African newspapers about entire homes in informal settlements going up in flames or children burning from open fires in very small enclosed spaces. Discussions around such incidents led to the extension of the PASLC curriculum to include topics such as dangers in the home, child abuse, television viewing, and child discipline. The curriculum also reflected parents' concern about their children's poor knowledge of the services provided at local places such as the police station, health clinic, fire department, post office, and so on.

Programme Staff

As indicated earlier, one of the main aims of PASLC is to establish reading, writing, and learning as important daily routines in African homes. This goal has meant that in designing workshop activities, the programme staff has tried to use the previously mentioned topics to develop these skills.

Reading: Using Family-Generated Texts. One of the first activities that PASLC engaged in was making supplementary reading books available to parents and training them in the use of these books, particularly in the use of pictures to decode text. Later, as parents shared their cultural knowledge and other experiences, this information was written down by literate family members, relatives, or neighbours. The writings became part of the reading material that family members used in PASLC.

Because the parents approached the texts with prior knowledge of what was contained in them, the process of reading was facilitated. Additionally, sometimes parents who could not read became interested in a reading activity when it began with the reading (and writing) of their own names and the names of their family members.

Reading: Using the Library. PASLC programme staff have discovered that parents generally have had mistaken perceptions about the library's role in the community. Four-hundred-and-eighty parents were surveyed by programme staff to find out what the parents thought the function of a library was. The majority of the parents surveyed said that

- only students attending high school were allowed in libraries,
- libraries were places where high school students went if they wanted somewhere to study, and
- children learn to read in school.

Because of the survey findings, the PASLC programme entered into a partnership with a local library to help familiarise local parents and their children with the workings of a library. The first activity was to take parents and children on a tour of the library. The children were then given tasks that required them to do extra reading in the library.

Writing Based on Family-Generated Text. Later in the paper, I will discuss at length how the PASLC programme staff have used family praise poems, family totems, and family trees to develop the writing skills of participating family members. Other items used for the purpose of encouraging families to generate text have included traditional recipes, games, and forms of entertainment. The projects on which these writing activities were based involved extensive collaboration and research that not only involved members of the immediate family but also members of the extended family who did not reside in the same household.

Learning. The programme workshops have covered topics relevant to learning such as time management, learning strategies, time wasters (including television viewing), parent-child interviews, storytelling, and group problem-solving. The programme staff make a conscious attempt to support parents and their children in connecting school knowledge with activities that take place in the home. For example, when recipes are discussed, the parents and children do measurements (What quantity do you need for your family?), estimations (How many cups of maize meal do you think will be needed to cook porridge in the pot we use at home?), units of measurement (What instrument can we use to measure water, green leaves, or meat?), and conversions (How do you convert Fahrenheit to Celsius or pounds to kilograms?), and they also practice reading time and using the conventions of recording time.

Once a year, parents and children are taken on an educational tour organised by PASLC. A trip to the National Zoological Gardens, for instance, entails preparing worksheets and activities based on animals in the zoo and studying the map of the zoo so that parents and children can get a preview of the zoo's layout. On this trip, the parents teach their children the African language names of the animals that they know, particularly those that connect with their family totems. The children are encouraged to read more about the animal of their choice and their totem and to make their own animal alphabet book.

The majority of the families with whom my colleagues at PASLC and I work come from depressed communities and are unable to purchase learning materials. As much as possible, the programme uses easily available materials such as junk mail, cardboard boxes, empty shoeboxes or detergent boxes, and newspaper advertisements and clippings.

Family Praise Poems and Family Totems. Praise poetry is an aspect of African oral literature that is found in many communities on the African continent. Oral literature also includes art forms such as stories, oral histories, riddles, and proverbs.

Although Okpewho (1992) and Scheub (1987) discuss praise poetry in relation to chiefs and kings, Vilakazi (1993) points out that Zulu praise poetry is not the sole preserve of people in power. Vilakazi's comment could be applied to all the African communities in South Africa because every family is a member of a particular clan. Vilakazi further states that a family praise poem helps in "tracing kin-

ship, relationship and genealogy" (1993, p. 56). Lekgothoane regards praise poems as traditional ways of African people saying prayer and stresses that not only kings have praise poems that tell of their great deeds but whole communities and commoners have them, too (1993).

The family praise poem is usually performed at very important stages of a person's life, such as when a child graduates from the initiation school, a couple marries, or a person is buried. The praise poem is performed whenever the family feels that a member has achieved something exceptional, and the nature of the performance of a praise poem will be determined by the context in which it is performed.

The family praise poem of the Balobedu exemplifies some of the main characteristics of a family praise poem:

Tau	Lion (A person whose totem is a lion)
Agee Molobedu wa moana tatja, Tatja	Greetings molobedu (a Bapedi clan found in the Northern Province) whose totem is tatja (a lion).
Laga mogale wa ga mmalea	A lion of the brave one of Mmalea.
Subela ga bo kgosi ya	Go yonder to the place ruled by Queen Modjadji
Mosadi Modkadki ke le molobedu ke ana	Being a Molobedu, my totem is a lion
tau Ke setlogolo sa Khuvhe mokgalabje	I am the grandchild of the old man Khuvhe
wa bo Mushathama Mushathama wa bo	a descendant of Mushathama, Mushathama a descendant of Ravele
Ravele la peu o a tswetsweng Venda	who by origin is from Venda,
la ga sekganorogo	A place famous for the harvesting or morogo (a plant with edible leaves.)

The praise poem belongs to the clan, but even though the praise poem of families belonging to the same clan will have some common elements, individual praise poems often differ in the names of the elders who form a part of a particular family's ancestral lineage. Such similarities and differences are discussed with the parents at PASLC workshops, and the parents also are encouraged to discuss the similarities and differences with their children. In the above praise poem, for instance, the names Khuve, Mushathama, and Ravele are important in the lineage of this particular family.

In the PASLC workshops, the focus falls not so much on the stylistic devices exemplified by the above praise poem but rather on the teaching points suggested by the poem. In addition to addressing the language issues, the workshops generally focus on the following topics:

- a brief geography of the Northern Province
- the lion's characteristics, habitat, and so on
- Queen Modjadji (popularly referred to as "The rainmaking Queen of the North")
- edible leaves, such as morogo, and a related lesson on very elementary botany, agriculture, and nutrition

Family totems and clan names are often built into the fabric of praise poems. Totems reveal important traits that the family prides itself on such as bravery for those whose totem is a lion, or power, ability, and determination for those whose totem is the crocodile. The following lines of the praise poem of the Bakwena ba Makgwakgwa show the traits of the crocodile as it swims against the flow of the current:

Kwena ha e hlape metsing e thulame	The crocodile never swims with the flow of the current
E hlapa e a nyolosetsa madibohong	It pushes the water up against the drift

Family Histories and Family Trees. As soon as family members in the PASLC programme began to research their family praise poems, they observed that younger family members started inquiring about the names and places mentioned in the poems. This questioning ultimately led to issues of genealogy, kinship, and history, and family members started looking at their own family trees and histories. As with the production of family praise poems, most families went through several drafts of their family trees or histories during which they discussed the mechanics of writing with programme staff.

In researching their family trees, families invariably discovered new information that formed an important and interesting aspect of their family histories. Families were encouraged to present their family trees in whatever way they wished, and the drawings that resulted indicate the different efforts that went into producing each work. The family trees went through drafts, and in some cases, all of one family's members tried to draw their family tree to see which drawing would be the best. In other cases, individual members of a family played different roles as they contributed to the documentation of their family trees and histories.

The Tsoai-Mudau family history, written by a family member named Francina, exemplifies some of the language issues that PASLC programme staff have dealt with in relation to family-generated texts.

> SALATHIEL ItumELENG MOSIMANE Bereng had 4 soNs aNd oNe Daughter
>
> Was The Third Child of The late BERENG Mosimane from Bloemfontein, Thaba-Nchu....
>
> MR and MRS S.A. MosimaNe first settlEd in Walmansthal and after that They Settled in Grasmere where The first child SARA was born and FiNally Settled in Pimville where The two children Ziphora and Sinky were born and the other one died when he was still 5 yrs....
>
> Ephraim was the first child of Maseng Legodi and Mamphoko TSOAI. They had one son and two sisters, Shadi and Mmakona
>
> Mamphoko died and her sisters and brothers decided to take the children because the father Married aNother wife. and brought them up. That is why they called them TSOAI and not Legodi....
>
> TheN Come FRANCINA Tebello Means Night vigil beccouse they said they waited for me the whole Night to be borN like people in the Night vigil.
>
> Until I was born the next morning. all my graNNies aUNts uNcles waited for me to be born. So I Francina is married to Victor Mudau....
>
> My grand mother, my mother's mother used to eat sour porridge
>
> They mix mealie meal and warm water in a clay pot called TsegaNe
>
> Afrer 3 to four days its ready and they cook as a soft porridge for breakfas and solid for diNNer with milk or morogo they were used to milk because my grandfather use to have cattle milked everyday aNd Make butter and cheese and sell.

Note that in this draft, Francina often has mixed upper- and lowercase letters in the same word and has used capital letters inconsistently. For instance, sometimes family names appear in capital letters, and sometimes they do not. Francina also does not observe sentence boundaries by begin a sentence with a capital letter and ending it with a fullstop (period). With the permission of the authors, the PASLC workshop groups use examples drawn from different volunteer parents' writings to discuss features such as the ones found in Francina's writing sample.

Interviews

PASLC programme staff interviewed six families about their work on praise poetry, family histories, and family trees, and the families' responses led to follow-up interviews in which each family was visited at least twice by programme staff. The interviews revealed that none of the parents had attempted to draw their family trees or write down their family praise poems or histories before they joined the PASLC programme. The majority of the parents also indicated that they had not considered that cultural factors such as family trees and praise poems could be relevant to their children's education. Some parents had encouraged their children to know their family praise poems, but they had not realized that such knowledge could help improve their own and their children's reading and writing skills and, therefore, they had not written their praise poems down.

All families questioned about PASLC found the programme interesting, felt that it entailed a lot of work, and realized that it was an ongoing study that needed to be extended each time there were family gatherings. Additionally, all the families interviewed mentioned that they and their children had benefited from the programme. The following list notes several specific issues that the programme staff also learned from the interviews.

Program activities should be intrinsically interesting to families. For example, the families wanted their family trees displayed for others to see, which was useful in workshops because other families learned from them.

Use of questioning as a knowledge production technique. A lot of questioning was used to

collect the information relating to the family trees. For instance, when programme participant Mosehle was asked how she had collected the information, she replied,

> I asked my maternal uncle how it came about that we should be called Bahlakwana. He explained that my grandfather was originally a Motswana. During the Difaqane battle, they ran away from the Free State. That is where my father [met] my mother. He then married and build his home in Lesotho. He [the uncle] explained that *Bahlakwana* means "those who come from elsewhere"—literally, Ba (they) hlaha (come) kwana (yonder) because we did not belong to Lesotho. I asked how many siblings my mother had. What about the siblings in my father's family? Why did my father not return to the Free State? He told me that the Free States used to belong to the kingdom of Lesotho. (author's translation)

Mosehle was asked why she persisted in asking so many different questions. She said that it was because she needed more information. This kind of relentless questioning in pursuit of knowledge was likened by programme staff to the kind of learning that is required in school, and parents were encouraged to promote this kind of persistence in their children when searching for answers.

Family-centred collaborative research. The family tree activity involved collaboration among family members. For example, the Qhalane family worked together and drew their family trees to see whose family tree would be the best. When they were all unhappy with their efforts, they sought help from a relative in the extended family. The Ntsala family got one of the brothers to help with the family tree drawing, and other members of the Ntsala family were involved in different ways: Some members reviewed the work to see if any revisions needed to be made, read what was written to check for accuracy of recording the information as it had been passed on to them, acted as scribes or collectors of information, and indicated other sources of relevant information. All Ntsala family members agreed that these activities tended to bond the family together.

Improved self-confidence in adult family members. One of the interviewees who is a member of a school governing council said that she had no confidence in meetings because she was not happy with her writing skills. Since she had begun participating in PASLC, her writing skills had improved to the extent that she was able to write notes to other council members.

Development of literacy in children. All families reported that their children were now highly motivated to read and to learn and that the PASLC activities had generated intrafamilial cooperative efforts related to their children's learning, which was not the case before they joined the programme. The writing skills of the children also had improved. I already have mentioned the case of a parent whose son initially had been declared a slow learner by schoolteachers. The parent was now happy to say that the boy had been awarded a prize because of his successful performance in school.

Prevention of the loss of identity. In one participating family, the grandmother would have gone to the grave with all the knowledge of the family's history if not for the activities promoted by PASLC. Fortunately, one of the family's children who is in grade 6 has been able to record the information for posterity.

Conclusion

Because contexts differ, educational initiatives cannot be transplanted easily from one place to another—let alone from one country or continent to another. However, there are certain educational principles that appear to be universal. In parental involvement, the sensitivity of family literacy practitioners to the contexts and cultures of the communities in which they work is one such principle. Failure to recognise such principles will deprive practitioners of a powerful vehicle that could help them form educational partnerships, particularly with formerly marginalized communities. This culturally sensitive approach is what makes the family literacy model of parental involvement so attractive.

Educators in African countries often lament the declining levels of motivation in young people today. This situation is particularly true in South Africa, where the phenomenon of the erosion of the culture of learning has been referred to as a national emergency. The family literacy approach to parental involvement could enable educators to

form meaningful partnerships with families to promote learning.

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SECTION 3

Promoting a Reading Culture: Book Development

A Multipronged Approach to Promoting a Reading Culture: The East African Experience

James Tumusiime

Uganda

The promotion of a reading culture in the countries of East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) has been going on for decades. Traditionally, reading was promoted by governments through the funding of the education sector in schools and colleges. Governments also fund the national public library networks and adult literacy campaigns. Only recently have other nongovernmental agencies joined in the promotion of a reading culture, and these other organisations have tried to promote reading using different approaches.

Associations of different stakeholders in the book industry, such as publishers, booksellers, authors, and libraries, have tried at different times to promote reading by using media campaigns, workshops, and seminars. What has been disappointing, however, is that after years of heavy investment in promoting reading and education in general, recent studies conducted in Uganda and Kenya show that only 10–16% of schoolchildren completing primary education will have attained the desired level of literacy and reading skills. This abysmal performance is attributed to a lack of reading practice caused by shortages of appropriate reading materials plus poor guidance from teachers, parents, and peers.

In the countries, hardly any reading has been taking place outside schools. Libraries report little enthusiasm from the public, and bookshops report poor sales. Publishers' lists have remained short, and great authors have moved abroad. Everyone with an interest in reading has kept asking, What is the problem?

Defining the Problem: The Blind Men and the Elephant

The absence of a reading culture in African societies has preoccupied many people and organisations for a long time. Different people have tried to define the problem according to their own understandings, and in the end, we have arrived at a situation similar to the proverbial blind men and the elephant. Each blind man after touching a different part of the elephant has defined the animal differently. In the case of East Africa and Uganda, in particular, there has been a lot of activity on all fronts in the promotion of reading over the last 15 years, but each stakeholder worked in isolation only to be frustrated by the failure to achieve the desired results.

Governments

African governments have been investing millions of dollars in the procurement of textbooks, construction of classrooms, payment of teachers salaries, funding of adult literacy programmes, the stocking of libraries, plus many other activities that would seem to promote a reading culture. The results have been less encouraging, as demonstrated by the previously mentioned findings in the studies on the reading standards of Kenyan and Ugandan primary school children.

Publishers

Most of the 1990s saw a lot of activity taking place in the publishing field with many publishing houses having sprung up in East Africa since the early part of that decade. However, many of these

publishers have found the going very tough. Except for the few lucky ones who get on the official textbook suppliers' list, the rest of the African publishers find the business similar to climbing a slippery wall. What is the reason for this situation? Few people buy the books these companies publish. The result is that many of these publishers have either closed down or combined their publishing business with other activities to survive. Most of their publishing is restricted to schoolbooks, and their role as preservers of national literature and heritage has assumed low priority.

Booksellers

Booksellers have been among the most disillusioned of the book industry stakeholders. First, they sell products that are not conventional household consumer items with steady and widespread consumption. The products that booksellers sell do not have the same widespread appeal in society as beverages such as soda or beer. Because of the poor reading culture in Africa, many people do not buy books. Yet, booksellers are supposed to compete for the same funding in banks—where they pay high interest rates—and the same rents and salaries as the other sectors because they employ people from the same workforce. Booksellers often are bypassed by government agencies in supplying books directly to end-users, that is, schools. Similarly, libraries and nongovernmental organizations that buy books often go directly to publishers, leaving booksellers by the wayside.

Authors

Authors are the producers of the raw materials for books and the publishing industry. They are expected to serve the literary needs of their societies because they understand their societies and know what the people want and ought to read. The reality is that authors are equally disillusioned. Most people who have tried their hands at writing rarely have had their aspirations realised. On average, fewer than 10% of all unsolicited manuscripts in East Africa are ever published. Even those manuscripts that are eventually published often end up being a source of frustration for both their authors and publishers, either because of unrealistic financial expectations or because of nontransparent accounting methods by struggling—and sometimes unethical—publishing houses. The result of this frustration is that potentially talented authors have turned their attentions to other, more lucrative activities.

End-Users of Books

Ultimately, the successful entrenchment of a reading culture is gauged by the degree of enthusiasm about books by their end-users, including schools and other educational institutions, government agencies that procure the books, libraries, and the general public. In East Africa, the main end-users of books are the Ministries of Education. The ministries dictate the terms regarding which books they need via the syllabuses whose requirements publishers have to work hard to meet. Most syllabuses are for textbooks, and their value in inculcating a reading culture in the population is questionable at best.

In most cases, parents are the ones who fund the books that are read beyond the classroom such as children's literature. However, there are few such books simply because publishers are not sure about their marketability and are reluctant to invest in them. Thus, members of the reading public are victims of this vicious cycle. The reading public does not buy such books in sufficient quantities to ensure the survival of a nontextbook publishing industry, but at the same time, the public cannot buy books that are not published. Ultimately, there is a stalemate.

These examples are of the stakeholders in the book chain who also act as facilitators and enhancers of a reading culture. Yet, as this report shows, the stakeholders have hardly created the desired effect. After the realisation that working in isolation would not advance the reading culture, different stakeholders in the book industry in the countries of East Africa came together and decided to adopt a multipronged approach to developing a reading culture in the region. The starting point has been the strengthening of the book industry.

Development of Stakeholders' Associations

In the 1980s and earlier, loose associations of publishers, authors, booksellers, and librarians were al-

ready in place in East Africa. Most of these bodies acted as professional clubs or trade associations, sometimes trying to enforce professional ethics on their members or overseeing trading guidelines and settling disputes between associations, especially between publishers and booksellers. For most of this time period, the associations were seen as independent entities pursuing different programmes that were beneficial to their members, but working in isolation did not help the associations or their members. That is why, after lengthy discussions, the associations decided to come together and work under one umbrella organisation within each country.

The umbrella organisations were initiated independently in the different countries. In Uganda there was the Uganda Publishers and Booksellers Association (UPABA), which was formed in 1990 and included authors and librarians in addition to the publishers and booksellers. This organisation was transformed into the National Book Trust of Uganda (NABOTU) in 1997. Its objective was to turn Uganda into a reading nation. Through NABOTU there would be a coordinated approach of all stakeholders on information sharing, research, and liasing with government and other institutions on book development issues in the country. Kenya set up the National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDC-K), and Tanzania formed Bamvita (the Book Development Council of Tanzania).

To use Uganda as an example, NABOTU acts as an umbrella organisation for the following stakeholder associations:

- Uganda Library Association
- Uganda Publishers Association
- The Writers Association
- Public Libraries Board
- Reading Association of Uganda
- Female Writers Association
- Literature Fraternity of Uganda
- Uganda Booksellers Association
- Uganda Printers Association
- Kampala Children's Library
- Uganda Literature Bureau
- Ministry of Education Resource Centre

These stakeholder associations maintain their independent agendas of serving their members, but they come together for the purpose of promoting the reading culture. The broad objectives of NABOTU are to help the participating associations to cooperate in achieving the following objectives:

- to promote a reading culture in Uganda through books
- to act as forum for all stakeholders in the book sector
- to create an information gathering system on the major processes and development of the book industry in Uganda and beyond
- to promote the development of a sustainable book industry in Uganda
- to influence legislation that promotes the freedom to publish and distribute books within Uganda and its borders
- to support and encourage literacy activities, especially in rural areas
- to cooperate for mutual benefit with other organisations in the area concerned
- to promote book fairs, Book Weeks, and other book trade events that serve the interests of the indigenous book industry in Uganda
- to participate in international and national conferences, seminars, and meetings that serve the interests of the indigenous book industry in Uganda
- to establish and maintain a databank to facilitate access to information on the book industry in Uganda

Since this approach was adopted, the East African region has been a hive of activity in the promotion of reading and the book industry. For example, Book Weeks have been held annually in all three countries, there have been workshops on reading, and reading tents have been organised both in rural and urban areas. Both political and civic leaders have graced the various occasions, as the media spotlight uncharacteristically focussed on books and reading.

To develop a coordinated regional approach, the umbrella organisations in the three countries of East Africa have been working together in the reading promotion campaign. With the help of the

Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the three organisations created the East African Book Development Association (EABDA), which brings together all the regional stakeholders in the book industry.

How the East African Book Development Association (EABDA) Was Founded

In 1997, a regional seminar called Overcoming Barriers to East African Book Trade, funded by the African Publishers Network (APNET), was held in Arusha, Tanzania. The seminar underscored the need for policy attention towards the industry, the reduction of taxes on book production, and the lowering of production costs to make books affordable to the majority.

Seminar participants committed themselves to initiating projects aimed at motivating the citizenry to appreciate, value, buy, and read books constantly. The goal is for a given citizen to become knowledgeable, informed, and skilled in order to meaningfully contribute to the region's economic growth. In 1998, with support from SIDA, the East African Book Weeks Project was launched and a committee comprised of five active members from each country was established to organise the weeklong festivals in three countries annually during the month of September.

The Book Weeks festivals endeavour to promote the importance of reading and books within a cultural context. Activities include book exhibitions, reading tents, literacy awards, book donations to school libraries, training seminars, and workshops. The Book Weeks have demonstrated tremendous success through growing participation by stakeholders, policy makers, and the general public. Because of their popularity, it has become necessary to broaden the Book Weeks activities to cater to the increasing numbers of participants. The expansion of this initiative to a yearlong book development project has necessitated the evolution of the Bookweek committee into a regional association—EABDA.

EABDA's Approach to Enhancing a Reading Culture

EABDA aims at enhancing a reading culture in East Africa, especially among children. In its approach, EABDA focuses on meeting the following three major challenges:

- to mobilise human, physical, and financial resources for developing effective projects that ensure the sustainable creation and supply of appropriate, affordable, and easily accessible reading materials to the region's populace, especially rural communities and schools
- to democratically implement a transparent, long-term book development programme that builds local capacity and allows for widest participation and ownership by regional book sector stakeholders
- to establish a centralised management and monitoring system to ensure that book development activities in all three countries are initiated with the same level of consistency and that the synergies created provide avenues for collaboration and the sharing of ideas among stakeholders of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania

EABDA also strives to meet the following specific objectives:

- to strengthen and liase with national stakeholder associations in the book sector and to jointly develop and promote authorship, production, publishing, reading, and book trade, especially in books in local languages
- to support training programmes for stakeholders within the region's book sector
- to initiate and support projects and public campaigns towards the enhancement of a book-reading culture in East Africa
- to support the development of school and community libraries and the training of teachers in reading and library development
- to promote cross-border book trade among the three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania by encouraging partnerships in authorship, publishing, bookselling, and printing individuals and institutions

- to organise regional meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences among regional stakeholders in order to strengthen professional cooperation
- to associate with and lobby the East African community and the governments of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania for the removal or reduction of taxes and excessive fees on book production and trade to enable the free flow of information across borders, in accordance with the Florence Agreement (a UNESCO-supported agreement eliminating taxes and tariffs on educational, scientific, and cultural materials such as books) and all its protocols
- to solicit funding from individuals, organisations, corporate bodies, donors, and donor agencies both within and outside the East African region towards development of the book industries and promotion of reading in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania
- to cooperate with national, regional, and international organisations with similar objectives and visions of developing East Africa's book sector and promoting reading in the region
- to carry out any other activities as may further the interests of the association

Conclusion

Three years is too short a time to fully evaluate the performance of this multipronged approach to solving the reading culture problem. Suffice it to say that some benefits are already apparent, and problems are being more clearly identified. Some of the approach's benefits include the following:

- by working to together, the different stakeholders now appreciate each other's roles, responsibilities, and concerns
- trust among stakeholders in conducting business has been enhanced
- synergy in promoting reading is apparent because of the joint programmes in which all stakeholders are involved
- the joint programmes of all key players in the book sector have attracted the attention of governments and donors, which means that their voices can no longer be ignored as they had been in previous individual attempts.
- the umbrella organisations have become one-stop centres for receiving and disseminating information on the book industry

Despite these achievements, problems still exist. For example, there is unequal influence in guiding the affairs of the umbrella organisations. In Kenya and Uganda in particular, publishers still call the shots because their associations are more organised and more financially sound than the other participating associations. Also, stakeholder associations and the umbrella organisations still depend on donor funds to run their activities. This dependence is risky because the availability of donor funds is not always guaranteed. Finally, most people who manage activities of both the stakeholder associations and umbrella organisations are volunteers. Their spirit of voluntarism is sometimes overstretched, and their output declines. However, publishers are very optimistic that the multipronged approach to reading promotion is the best option for promoting a culture of reading in East Africa.

Promoting a Reading Culture: The Children's Book Project Experience

Pilli Dumea

Tanzania

The Children's Book Project (CBP) for Tanzania was established in 1991 as a measure to motivate and support the production of books for children and to promote a reading culture in the country. Immediately after the project's establishment, several international organisations interested in education and books joined in supporting it. Originally, it was envisaged that the project would last for five years. However, the stakeholders—publishers, writers, illustrators, printers, teachers, others who have an interest in books, and a number of donors—were satisfied with the successes of the project and recommended the extension of the project activities.

The objectives of the project are to collaborate with publishers

- to produce children's books in Kiswahili, the national and official language of Tanzania;
- to encourage and support indigenous authorship, publishing, design, printing, and bookselling; and
- to increase the accessibility of books in order to improve children's reading abilities.

Achievements of Phase 1: 1991–1995

At the end of phase 1, CBP had coordinated the publication of 104 titles and 312,000 copies of books targeting all levels of preschool and primary school children. The books were distributed to rural libraries, primary schools, teacher resource centres, and preschools, most of which were in the southern regions of Tanzania. The rationale for selecting these regions was that the Canadian Organisation for Development Through Education (CODE), which helped in the establishment of CBP, was working in that area. The Canadian Organisation for Development Through Education already had established structures and systems of support in the regions (e.g., community libraries). Therefore, it was more appropriate to send books where there were structures to provide a conducive atmosphere for reading. Also, the southern regions were considered at that time to be the most disadvantaged regions in Tanzania with regard to educational facilities.

Publishers were required by CBP to produce 5,000 copies of each approved title. From this print run, CBP purchased 3,000 copies and the remaining, which were left in the hands of the publishers, strengthened them financially. The Children's Book Project organised training courses, workshops, and seminars for people in the book industry with the objective of improving their skills. The project also organised courses for writers, illustrators, publishers, editors, and booksellers and arranged for attachments for editors and illustrators to big publishing companies in neighbouring countries, where they stayed for two months.

Promoting a Reading Culture

In 1996, when phase 1 of the CBP was expiring, the stakeholders met to deliberate on the future of the project and realised that despite having had more than 100 titles of children's books produced and distributed, poor reading skills were still in evidence in schools. The evidence showed that the books were not effectively used. As a result, CBP

initiated a readership programme to build a reading habit among schoolchildren.

In 1997, CBP launched a pilot readership programme for improving reading instruction in schools and promoting reading habits in children. The programme started with 6 schools from 2 regions and gradually expanded to include 24 more schools. The following are the programme's objectives, beginning with the main one:

- to improve students' learning of basic literacy skills by training teachers in reading and writing methodologies for the ultimate aim of giving children skills that will enable them to read for meaning, acquisition of knowledge, and pleasure
- to provide quality books to schools
- to encourage and support the primary schools to establish libraries and to train the staff in their running and management

Activities of the Readership Programme

Training workshops. Usually three initial courses are conducted during the first year for teachers in the project schools, and then refresher courses are given to them during the second and third years. During the first workshop, the teachers are given an overview of what reading entails, and they are shown how the CBP readership programme helps them to develop literacy skills in their classrooms. The teachers learn to appreciate the value of books and stories in teaching. Teachers also are taught about the different types of books and resources that are found in the classroom resource collection that forms the basis for the classroom library and are given an overview of how these resources could be deployed usefully in the classroom, while still meeting the demands of the curriculum.

Additionally, the teachers learn how to choose a good story, introduce it to the students, and follow up the storytelling with a focus on language development based on the story. The teachers also learn how to carry out shared reading and writing with the students for the purpose of developing reading and writing skills. At this point, the teachers are taught how to make Big Books large enough for shared reading and Small Books for individuals, an exercise that is quite exhilarating and involving. During the shared reading and writing course, teachers learn how reading and writing are connected and that writing is a product of reading. Demonstration lessons are carried out in shared reading and writing, after which teachers are given the assignment of preparing their own stories in the form of a Big Book. All the teachers in the first course prepare Big Books in groups. The teachers also learn group teaching methods so pupils will be given opportunities to read and share stories in smaller groups under specific guidelines.

(At the time of publication, CBP is working on the preparation of guidebooks for primary school teachers on how to teach reading on all the above topics. A readership manual already has been published and issued to teachers.)

In the second workshop, teachers make Big Books individually. All these Big Books stories are based on the original stories, which were read during shared reading lessons, but this time the stories have alterations of the beginnings, endings, characters, or setting while the themes remain the same. Teachers also are taught how to guide their pupils to make Small Books from the Big Books in groups.

Monitoring. Follow-up visits, also known as support visits, are conducted three times a month for each school by the training and monitoring coordinator and her assistant. The women observe a few lessons at each school to see whether the new methodologies advocated by CBP are used on a daily basis, and they randomly test some students to find out how well they are learning. Where the need arises, the training and monitoring coordinator and her assistant give advice on how to make educational improvements.

Book provision. The Children's Book Project provides books for all the reading levels in schools, which are level I for preschool classes I and II, level II for classes III and IV, and level III for classes V–VII.

Reading competitions and reading tents. The Children's Book Project usually conducts reading competitions every year in the schools selected for the project. These competitions start at the individual school level, and then the winners advance to compete with students from other schools. The winners are given prizes of schools bags, books,

and exercise books as incentives for children to put more effort into reading.

In addition to the reading competitions that are conducted by CBP, the project also is entrusted with the running of reading tents during Book Fair Week, which is organised every year. The Children's Book Project has been running the reading tents since 1997, and the activities conducted in them include competitions in reading aloud and for comprehension, poetic recitation, drawing on the stories that have been read, telling traditional stories, and retelling stories the students have read. All these activities are aimed at motivating children to read and sustaining their interest in reading.

Library establishment and use. The Children's Book Project staff encouraged teachers to set aside a room for establishing a library and to purchase cupboards and bookshelves for class libraries. Where these items are not possible, books can be put in boxes that are stored in the headteacher's office at the end of the day. The Children's Book Project provides books of all types for the establishment of the libraries and continues providing books to these libraries twice a year. Most of the books provided are CBP books, but sometimes we do shop around the bookshops to get books from neighbouring countries, especially English language books.

These libraries help sustain the reading habit. Teachers are encouraged to read all the books in their class libraries and to start their daily language lessons by reading two or three pages of a book to motivate students to read the books that are in their classrooms. The teachers are asked to read the books to the students regularly in order to develop a positive attitude towards reading among the children, which requires them to sustain student interest and inspire the spirit of reading in the students. It is easier for the students to read books that are in the classroom, and they are more likely to tell each other about the books they have read. Access to such books enables students to read and reread them, which improves their reading skills. The Children's Book Project helps the teachers learn how to use ledger books for keeping records on book movement. Teachers also learn to make a reading chart because reading chart records are a strong instrument for motivating children to read the books.

In order to ensure that children are reading for meaning and information, students are required to write summaries of the books they have read. Parents and the general community are encouraged to support their children in reading at home, by reading to them and asking their children to read to them or talk to them about the books they have read. Furthermore, CBP encourages parents to buy books for their children.

Readership Programme Achievements

The Children's Book Project readership programme has realized the following achievements:

- All 12 project schools have set up classroom libraries, and nearly 80% of them have established school libraries that are well managed and effectively used (i.e. they keep ledger books and book movement records). Time for reading also is allocated in the classrooms and in the library.
- The programme has benefited a total of 216 teachers who have received training on new methodologies of teaching and learning reading. A total of 17,776 pupils have been benefiting from the project and its resources.
- Our evaluation has shown that a more positive attitude has developed towards reading among pupils in the programme schools as compared to nonprogramme schools. This change is a good indicator of the development of reading habits among the students at the programme schools. The community also has benefited because children have changed their behaviour, and instead of loitering around, they now are reading books at home.
- The majority of the teachers in the programme schools have begun adopting the new methodologies of teaching reading. As a result, lessons in such classes have become livelier, more interesting, and pupil centred because children are involved in the process to the maximum level.

- Teachers in the programme schools have made a lot of teaching and learning materials, which have made the classrooms more attractive and friendlier to the students. Consequently, students teach each other using the teaching materials during break time. Teachers also have become more creative in the making of teaching aids using locally found materials. They have all made Big Books and Small Books, and these materials are used both as resources and teaching aids. The six veteran schools have made up to 20 books on different topics and subjects.

Lessons and Challenges

The CBP readership programme has generated a lot of interest. Teachers, parents, and education officials have recommended expansion of the programme. Experience has shown that the impact of the readership programme can be significant if the programme works in small schools concentrating with a few grades.

In the first two phases of the programme, only the district education officials were involved in the selection of schools. This situation resulted in minimal involvement of education officials in the programme activities. In phase 3, the district education officer, the chief inspector of schools in the district concerned, and the teacher resource centre coordinators are involved in training activities so they also will understand the programme and its activities. These people also will be involved in monitoring of the programme activities in schools. This involvement will eventually enhance a sense of ownership and responsibility at the district level and facilitate the extension of the programme activities to other schools in the district.

The readership programme evaluation shows that there are some parents who are not aware of the programme in the schools. In phase 3, we will put deliberate measures in place to create awareness of the programme and its activities in the parents and the community at large through parents meetings and school committees and during reading competitions to encourage and motivate parents to contribute to the programme activities. This measure will instil community interest in the programme and a sense of ownership and belonging. In this way, the growth and sustainability of the programme will be ensured.

The Children's Book Project has accumulated considerable expertise both in the development of the project and in approaches to children's book publishing and reading promotion. Several organisations and individuals have contacted CBP staff for consultation on reading and books for children, and we render all the requested services free of charge.

The Children's Book Project staff is working to meet two challenges. First, there still are not enough reading materials available for children. In order to realise the objective of developing a reading culture, children need be provided with different kinds of books. In view of this, CBP will continue coordinating the production of children's books that are attractive, interesting, and appropriate for the levels of the students. Second, both evaluations of the readership programme and the performance of students in reading competitions show that there is still a lack of effective reading skills among children. This information indicates that CBP has to continue training teachers on the new methodologies of teaching reading and sustaining interest in reading among the children.

Conclusion

The success of CBP depends largely on its collaboration with other organisations with similar objectives. Therefore, CBP works closely with publishers, writers, editors, illustrators, teachers, and the Ministry of Education and Culture. With all of these groups working together, we are confident that we all can build a reading community in Tanzania.

Association for Creative Teaching (ACT) as an Agent for Book Development in Cameroon

Patrick Mbunwe Samba, Mike Nwana, N.M. Tangu, and Semuyeh Nyugab

Cameroon

In 1981, the Association for Creative Teaching (ACT) was formed with the objective of encouraging creativity in the students and teachers of Cameroon and sponsoring creative teaching and creative writing projects. Thus, ACT produced supplementary reading materials based on the Cameroonian cultural context in order to help remedy the serious lack of reading materials. By 1988, 16 supplementary readers produced by ACT (some in longhand) already were circulating in the schools in two Cameroonian provinces. The creation of the readers was the beginning of an extensive reading project.

By 1991, the British In-Service Teacher-Training (INSET) project arrived in Cameroon with a more reinforced Extensive Reading Programme (ERP) and donated book baskets—each containing 90 simplified readers, mainly by British authors—to some secondary schools in the Northwest Province. Among these 90 readers were the 16 ACT readers that the British INSET project had purchased. By 1994, 60 schools in the Northwest Province of Cameroon had received packages of ACT supplementary readers sponsored by two Rotary Clubs in North America. These books went to both primary and secondary schools.

The Extensive Reading Programme has become a permanent feature in the curriculum of some schools in the Northwest Province of Cameroon, an innovation that has been very satisfying not only to the ACT but also to the Ministry of National Education. That ACT books, which are culture-based and produced entirely in Anglophone Cameroon, are today sitting side by side on some schools' shelves in the Northwest Province with books from the United Kingdom is no small achievement and the first of its kind in this part of the world. In the words of one of ACT's Canadian supporters, "One of ACT's achievements has been the publication of a series of reading books which preserve some of the indigenous knowledge of the country and make this Cameroonian literature available to Anglophone schools."

The Association for Creative Teaching is committed to the production of books through research, especially because oral culture is the basis for the emerging written culture. By writing books based on oral tradition, traditional Cameroonian stories can be made applicable to contemporary situations as the need arises. In order to achieve this objective, the ACT members have agreed that

- materials for research should be as close to the original sources as possible;
- if the material is for teaching and creativity, the teachers should adapt it to classroom situations in the light of contemporary values;
- stress should be put on the quality of the stories in order to bring out the desired moral lesson;
- the materials that already have been gathered should be indexed and filed according to subject.

The ACT supplementary readers are grouped into such genres as folklore, science, agriculture, social studies, art and culture, language, environmental studies, fiction, and biography. In an attempt at success, there has continued to be the

need for experts in Cameroon and abroad to assist in editing these stories in order to enable us to adapt the materials for ERPs.

The Association for Creative Teaching has created booklets to guide the production of its publications. These booklets have been spread to all the administrative units of the Northwest, Southwest, and Centre Provinces in Cameroon. In order to authenticate and/or verify the originality of the elements of the narratives contained in the Supplementary Readers, some elderly villagers, who were deemed quite knowledgeable in these areas of study, were given copies of the documents resulting from interviews. All these strategies and methods were necessary because ACT realised that the English language still could be the medium for expressing the truly multiple ethnic African identity and be used to promote rather than weaken Cameroon's ancient traditions and languages.

Working Within the Book Chain

The Association for Creative Teaching has promoted the practice of having every school buy 5 volumes of 17 editions of its supplementary readers for senior primary and junior secondary schools. These volumes are circulated among the pupils in a rotation so all the pupils will have read all the books after a certain period. This process has provided an effective way of making the students read stories and activities about their people, culture, belief systems, and environment. In some cases, the teachers have gotten the students in their classes to write, collect, and edit their own stories in a volume for the class to use as their textbooks. This method enables the students to learn legends, stories, and activities from different areas.

Conclusion

The Association for Creative Teaching needs to conduct more training seminars and workshops for teachers in participating schools, to encourage the use of extensive reading books, and to help teachers incorporate them into their curriculum. The program also must be extended to include all teacher training colleges so the student teachers are used to the idea of extensive reading when they become teachers in the field after graduation. The program also must expand the stock of supplementary readers by producing new readers from the numerous manuscripts that are already available. In particular, ACT must meet the vital needs of the Cameroonian community by developing readers that focus on the topics of food, water, and health.

Demystifying Science for Children Through Reading: The ELSSA Approach

Sam T. Bajah

Nigeria

No country in the world today needs to make a case for the teaching of science in schools. Rather, science is a vital component in any national curriculum. In Nigeria, one of the goals of primary education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (1998) is "to lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking" (p. 10). Therefore, science is to be taught as a core subject to all the pupils at the primary school level.

Laying down a policy is quite different from monitoring how well it is being implemented. Communicating science to primary school children calls for effective teaching methods, and teachers must employ the dual approaches of reading science and doing science. The Early Learning Science Series for Africa (ELSSA) adopts both methods in what has come to be called the ELSSA Approach. ELSSA believes that reading is vital in the learning of science as depicted in the following poem:

Read a Book
Read a book, read a book
You will learn so many things.
When you do your work in Science
You will find something to read.
If you read a book a week
You will always be at your peak. (Bajah, 2000, p. 34)

The ELSSA slogan of "Think Science, Sing Science and Act Science" presupposes that the student will have to read something. Therefore, there is a meeting point between science and reading. The ELSSA philosophy is to develop materials for children to read, hence the creation of our Science Readers, which are described in this chapter.

That Word *Science*

In all classes in which science is taught, teachers need to explain what science is. The traditional teaching method is to try to present several definitions to the students. The ELSSA Approach presents materials for the children to read. For example, the following two poems are about science time and the basic tools that the children can use to study science—their senses:

Science Time
Teacher says it's time for Science
A time to use our senses
Look, hear, touch and smell
It's fun time again
Science time is time for fun
And not a time to fear. (Bajah & Asim, 1997, p. 3)

My Five Senses
I have eyes; I can see
With my ears I can hear
I have a nose; I can smell
With my body I can feel
And with my tongue I can taste
But only when it is safe. (Bajah & Asim, 1997, p. 4)

ELSSA uses this approach to underscore the forward-looking concept of science as a way of finding out about things in our physical environment. This approach immediately leads to a natural question, How does one recognize science? ELSSA takes a position that appears to be new to many learners: Science begins when something happens twice. Does science have a face? Is science real? Is science meant for all? Again, ELSSA tries to answer all these questions by presenting the learner with something to read.

Up up goes my ball
And down again it comes
It will always come falling down
No matter how high I throw. (Bajah & Asim, 1997, p. 8)

Science is good but can be bad
If taught and applied without concern
Science is human for it has a face
Science is powerful if you use it well.
(Bajah & Asim, 1997, p. 2)

Scientists believe that the identification of a problem is the beginning of scientific wisdom. Children are exposed to problem identification by reading the poems in the ELSSA Science Readers.

Re-Presenting Science

Why use poetry in children's science classes? ELSSA wants to re-present science to children, which we believe is sufficient reason to depart from the traditional approach in teaching science to children. No one can answer the question, Why use poetry in children's science? better than a poet, and what follows is what Professor Niyi Osundare, a renowned poet, writes in the foreword to the bestseller in ELSSA's Science Poems for Children series (Bajah et al., 1997).

> Often people ask: what have science and poetry got to do with each other? After all, one deals with facts and figures while the other thrives on words, words, words. This book answers the question and settles our doubt in a very eloquent way.
>
> A small, extremely useful book, *Science Poems for Children* takes readers by the hand and leads them through some of the fundamental issues in science; heat, gravity, rotation and revolution of the earth, electricity, magnetism, friction. Common natural phenomenon such as thunder and lightning, mirage, air, sun, moon, rainbow, etc. are given simple scientific explanations, while a number of poems spell out the methods of 'Healthy Living'.
>
> Even more important, this book teaches science through poetry and poetry through science. Music provides a meeting point for both. The lines are crisp and sweet to sing, easy to memorize and easy to remember.
>
> One of the greatest challenges of education is the problem of devising simple ways for teaching difficult subjects. Science Poems has accomplished that task by showing that science is not just a laboratory or classroom matter but also a subject fit for rap and rhyme, that indeed,
>
> Science time is time for fun
>
> And not a time to fear. (p. vii)

The ELSSA Approach strives to develop children's visual language by presenting relevant science concepts in an interesting way for them to read. ELSSA also takes into consideration children who are only able to "read" pictures, so the ELSSA books are suitable for use across a wide age range.

The Development of the ELSSA Series

From 1991 to 1994, I was on a special assignment as the Chief Programme Officer for Science, Technology, and Mathematics Education (STME) at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. I had the opportunity there to see firsthand what development has gone on in STME throughout the Commonwealth (a group of 54 developed and developing nations united to advance democracy, human rights, and social and economic development) and the United States. I also had the opportunity to take a second look at what we as science educators are doing in Nigeria. It dawned on me that if science educators were to prepare our children to embrace science, we would need to change our approach in presenting science. Unless we make science interesting and challenging, more and more children will be turned away from science and Nigeria will be worse off for it.

The above rationalisation was reinforced in me after I actively took part in the 1993 world conference supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—PROJECT 2000+ (Scientific and Technological Literacy for All). After the conference, I resolved to start ELSSA, which has five objectives:

- to allow children to cultivate the habit of reading
- to extend and reinforce natural skills in children
- to encourage children to learn science at their own pace
- to take children ahead in a changing environment
- to involve parents in the learning process

The ELSSA philosophy is embodied in the phrase "Catch them young." When I was conceptualizing ELSSA, I had the singular opportunity of talking with a wide range of experts—scientists, medical doctors, artists, science educators, and reading specialists. Because children constitute ELSSA's target audience, the program relied on them as the main critics. For instance, when deciding on the use of pumpkinheads as the symbol of the books' characters, we relied on the judgement of children. The pumpkinheads were their choice, and we are glad that this symbol continues to act as source of attraction to and interest in the ELSSA books. Indeed, ELSSA has registered that feature as our symbol.

In ELSSA's master plan, we have noted the project's intention to produce 42 science readers covering all relevant areas in science, including health. The Early Learning Science Series for Africa focuses on health because if children are not healthy, they cannot enjoy science. Therefore, ELSSA staff work closely with practicing medical doctors whenever we are developing a Science Reader on health. So far, ELSSA has developed and published 12 of the proposed 42 series titles. The books that have already been published are the following:

1. *Let Us Begin Science*
2. *Science Poems for Children*
3. *Colours*
4. *Stop Malaria, Stop Drama*
5. *Stop Malaria Text*
6. *Adventures of Asan and Amiko With Insects*
7. *Forces: Push and Pull*
8. *Guinea Worm Disease in Gaga Village*
9. *Caring for Your Body*
10. *Asan and Amiko Kick Polio out of Africa*
11. *Asan and Amiko Learn About Measles*
12. *AIDS: The Wicked Disease*

Inculcating the Reading Habit in Children

Educators in Nigeria often have lamented the lack of a reading culture among the Nigerian public. Teachers are noticing that many students do not read outside their prescribed textbooks. Students would rather read "revision texts" designed to prepare them for examinations than the main textbooks for their classes. Nigerian children now spend a large amount of time watching television, and some researchers claim that there is a decline in academic achievement because of children's increased television-watching time. So what must be done to reverse the perceived trend away from reading?

Nigeria needs concerned researchers, parents, and citizens to introduce an intervention strategy that will enhance the reading culture of Nigerians in general, making Nigerian children imbibe the reading culture. I am optimistic that if Nigerians provide their children with the right materials, the children will read voluntarily. Children will read materials that are informative, eye-catching, relevant to their environments, easy to comprehend, and affordable. The project staff's experience with ELSSA books is that children will read materials that are appealing to them. I sincerely think that the same enthusiasm could be sustained in the wider community if and only if people are provided with reading materials that appeal to them.

In all the ELSSA books, there are characters with whom children can identify. Asan and Amiko—the two main characters in the books—are primary school children and a twin brother and sister. Asan and Amiko always want to learn things; therefore, they practice science at home, at school, and on the playground.

Involving Parents and Teachers

There is no doubt that to a large extent, children depend on their parents and teachers for many things. If parents have to sustain the interest of children in reading generally, they must provide the children with reading materials. When children ask their parents to buy some reading materials because they want to read them, the parents should oblige. In fact, in the ELSSA Approach, parents are expected not only to provide reading materials but also to help and guide their children. My colleagues involved with ELSSA and I have observed that parents who have low literacy want to see their children reading, and they sometimes ask their older children to read to the younger ones.

The teacher's role in helping children to read is crucial in the ELSSA Approach. The ELSSA team

organizes workshops for nursery and primary school teachers to familiarise them with the ELSSA books. Then, these teachers are guided on how to use the books in the conventional classroom, which is crucial to ELSSA if the books are to achieve the set goals. The teachers also are put through process skills in science, which include reading. For example, in the ELSSA book *Let Us Begin Science*, the five process skills listed are observing, grouping, measuring, communicating, and reading.

One measure of the ELSSA Approach's success is when a child locates one of the books, picks it up, goes to a quiet corner, and starts reading entirely on his or her own. Children should set themselves the goal of trying to read all the available ELSSA books, and they should be able to discuss what they have read with their friends and, possibly, with their parents who have low literacy skills. In this manner, ELSSA makes it possible for children to learn some science and cultivate the habit of reading.

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Girls and Literacy: Gender Issues in Textbooks for Primary School Children in Cameroon

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United States

Each time I thumb through the pages of the most recent edition of the *World Almanac*, I am greeted with the poor state of literacy in African countries. African literacy levels are not only low, but they are also lower for women than for men. To make matters worse, women are faring worse than men in almost every other aspect of life on the African continent. What exactly is the problem?

The first thing to ask is, To what extent do definitions of literacy take into consideration how well readers understand what they read and whether they can actually apply the skills, knowledge, and concepts acquired from the printed text to which they have been exposed? Studies of literacy issues are typically concerned with people learning to read in a language that is useful for work purposes and how such literacy affects the socioeconomic climate of the community. The studies generally are concerned with the kind of literacy that produces efficient and productive workers. How valuable are such literacy programmes? Puchner (2001), in a study of specific literacy programmes in Mali, points out that "being able to read and write [has] had very little impact on the lives of women who [are] literate" (p. 244) in that community.

Recently, researchers and educators have adopted a broader definition of literacy that includes meaning-making and critical thinking. Educators need to look at the methods and materials that are being used to teach reading and ask whether they are imposing attitudes and values on the learner in the process of developing literacy. For example, Powell, Cantrell, and Adams (2001), speak of the "non-neutrality of knowledge and texts" (p. 779).

Critical pedagogy can help alleviate literacy problems. As Powell and colleagues note, a "primary goal of critical pedagogy is to promote democracy by working toward a more just and equitable society" (p. 773). It has become evident that we as educators must do more to prepare our children for the 21st century. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to reexamine how African children are taught to read and write in schools by paying attention to the literacy curriculum and the possibilities it creates for these children to become contributing citizens in the local and global communities when they grow up. For the purposes of this essay, I have limited my discussion on this issue to literacy instruction in Cameroon.

Analysis of Gender Issues in Primary School Textbooks in Cameroon

Although schools in the West have tailored their literacy curricula to include authentic literature, resources in Cameroon are limited and the textbook remains the primary resource for reading instruction. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the quality of the textbooks that drive the literacy curriculum for children in classes 1–7.

This paper discusses the portrayal of gender roles in two primary textbook series that are currently being used in Cameroon, and the focus is on how these books affect girls' perception of themselves vis-à-vis their male counterparts. The series are Champions, which is used to teach

English reading to Francophone children, and Passwords, which is used to teach English reading to Anglophone children. I will focus on how gender inequality is interwoven in the stories and activities in these series and show how the messages inadvertently given in these two textbooks are that girls

- do not deserve to be in the limelight like their male counterparts do;
- must always share space, although boys do not necessarily have to;
- are stupid and need to be rescued and protected; and
- must accept hardship and loneliness as their fate in life.

Stories are important in people's lives. I remember that when I was a child, adults in our little plantation community used oral tales to illustrate specific points to me. Whether in print or not, the stories adults share with children affect their perceptions of themselves, their environments, and others.

Boys as the Community's Focus in the Champions Series

When I read through the textbooks in this series, the first thing that struck me was the emphasis on boys. The activities, excerpts, and page layouts all pointed to the assumption that boys are more valued than girls. Two examples show this assumption.

Are you a horse?, the lesson in book 2, unit 5, shows a nincompoop of a girl asking questions that are correct syntactically but make little sense semantically. Six pictures show the girl and the object whose identity she seeks to understand. Some of the dialogue reads as follows:

Girl:	Excuse me. Are you a stick?
Object:	No! I am not a stick. I am a snake!
Girl:	Excuse me. Are you a stone?
Object:	No! I am not a stone. I am a tortoise.
Girl:	Excuse me. Are you a log?
Object	No! I am not a log. I am a crocodile. (p. 40)

The lesson exploits the stereotype of girls as stupid and fearful. A parallel lesson that ultimately validates the male experience is found in unit 6, in which this time a boy is asking the questions. The conversation goes as follows:

Boy:	Are you a horse?
Object:	No. I am an elephant. I have big ears.
Boy:	Are you a cat?
Object:	No. I am a mouse. I have small teeth.
Boy:	Are you a lion?
Object:	Yes. I am a lion. I have big teeth.
Boy:	Are you a bird?
Object:	Yes. I am a parrot. I have a big beak.
Boy:	Are you a parrot?
Object:	No. I am a hen. I have a small beak. (p. 48)

Not only are the responses better, the boy also is courageous as he sits close to the lion's mouth, sits on the elephant's tusk, and picks up the mouse with his hand. These actions contrast the actions of the girl, who runs away each time she discovers the true identity of the creature. The animals also treat the boy with respect and take the time to explain to him who they are. Additionally, the boy's lines are intelligible.

Throughout the entire Champions series, boys are more visible than girls, are ascribed better roles, and are allowed better dialogue. The majority of the lesson titles focus on boys, and the lessons that target girls often end up accommodating boys and others.

An even sadder situation is encountered in book 6 of the series. In *A Special Boy* (unit 1, lesson 1), the reader meets a blind boy who is literate in Braille. When he tells another boy that he can read a book with his fingers, the other boy compliments him by saying, "That's amazing" (p. 4). In contrast, in lesson 3 of the same unit the reader meets Amina, a girl who has problems with her eyes. The lesson is titled *Poor Amina*. Amina spends most of the time apologising for not seeing properly, until she finally gets a new pair of glasses. Her lack of proper vision is perceived as a deficiency for which she must apologise, whereas the blind boy is perceived as "special."

Girls, Family Life, and Worldly Pursuits in the Champions Series

Most of the lessons in the Champions series reinforce the message that girls must value family life more than boys. In the lesson *A Clean House* (book 2, unit 9, lesson 3), the reader meets Mrs. Amadou, who works out of her home as a doctor and also does the chores. In this lesson, the females run the house, care for sick children, take care of everybody at home, and—in the case of Mrs. Amadou—must go to work as well. The young girls in the lesson must learn to balance their domestic and school responsibilities well. The reader seldom sees the father figure in these books. Should the burden of raising well-rounded children be placed solely on females?

Boys as Agents of Progress and Modernisation in the Champions Series

The books in the Champions series give the impression that a girl can be anything she wants but she will never be as good as a male. This message is suggested through the settings and choices offered to girls. In book 3, unit 6, a girl named Abiba lives in a village and a boy named Paul lives in a town. Abiba has dinner with her mother and siblings, plays with her siblings, and reads a book. Paul eats lunch with his mother and brother; has dinner with the entire family, including his father; plays with his friends; and listens to the radio. While the girl's world is limited to certain siblings and her mother, Paul's world includes his parents, siblings, and other people to show how worldly he is. Paul also pays attention to current events and is presented as a participant in modern civilisation.

As the examples show, the Champions series is full of gender issue problems.

The Focus on Stories and Other Literary Texts in the Passwords Series

The Passwords series, meant for Anglophone children in Cameroon, does a better job than the Champions series at portraying girls and women, but there is room for improvement. From the Passwords series, I randomly selected books 3, 5, and 6, which contain several original and adapted folk tales, excerpts from classics, and poems. What is striking about the folk tales with human characters is that they portray girls in stereotypical lights. Most of the poems focus on the female experience in Africa and other parts of the world. As I read through the texts, I saw that girls are portrayed as stupid people who need to be rescued or protected.

The Magic Boat in book 5 is the story of a young woman seeking a suitor. She chooses a hyena, who disguises himself as a handsome, prosperous man. She accepts this suitor's proposal against her parent's better judgement. Of course, the girl gets into all kinds of trouble, and she eventually is rescued by her younger brother, who had the wisdom to follow her to her new home. The girl is portrayed as stupid, gullible, and materialistic, and her brother is depicted as industrious.

The Monster in the River in book 6 takes the concept of female ignorance a step further by having the chief's daughter jeopardise the lives of several villagers through her foolishness. Although the endangered village girls are eventually saved by the men in their community, the girls learn the lesson that they are incapable of good judgement.

Another theme that runs through the Passwords series is that females must accept hardship and loneliness as their fate in life. This theme is best illustrated by three of the poems in the series. The poems acknowledge the hardship of a woman's life and remind them of the sacrifices they make for everybody. Although the poems are good reminders to children never to forget their mothers, there is the danger of glorifying suffering as a way of life that girls should embrace. Contrastingly, the two poems that address men—*Mr. Nobody* and *The Lazy Man*—are so comical that the reader can easily attribute the men's vices to some form of ingenuity instead of seeing them as flaws. Either way, males prevail in the series.

Literacy Implications of Gender Portrayals in Cameroonian Textbooks

What does it mean to ascribe specific gender roles to Cameroonian children that tend to undermine their potential? To me, this stereotyping suggests that although we cherish the notion of all children gaining education, we still believe that males are superior. In the cases of the Champions and

Passwords series, this belief is communicated through the stories included in the textbooks.

Images that perpetuate gender stereotypes limit students' possibilities and thwart their efforts to be contributing citizens in our global community. This serious issue must be addressed by textbook authors and publishers, but for now, with guidance from classroom teachers familiar with critical pedagogy, children must learn how to read against these texts and begin to set higher goals that will liberate their minds and spirits.

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Publishing Cross-Border Languages: Problems and Prospects

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The wonderful thing about language is that it cannot be limited by territorial borders. How beautiful it is to hear a Malawian who is addressing Britons in their own land make a mistake and say, "I mean *Ujeni*, I mean *Ujeni*!" Although languages know no borders, the existence of different dialects between regions or countries presents a challenge to a publisher whose publications will be used by people who speak these different languages.

Cross-Border Book Trade

The fact that books move between Malawi and Zambia on trade terms is a sign that the dialect problem in Africa can be surmounted. For example, *Kalenga Ndi Mnzace* by Phiri (1971), *Cinyanja Cina* by Gwengwe (1973), and *Mau Okuluwika M'Chinyanja* by Ntara (1972) are used in Zambian schools as well as Malawian schools. However, the publisher of these books fails to realize their full sales potential by printing a separate set of texts for each market, changing them according to orthographical rather than linguistic variations. If the publisher were to print different versions of the books for both Zambia and Malawi, the print run would increase and possibly double. This increase would reduce the cost of production per book tremendously because the greater the total print run, the lower the unit cost of each book. A reduced book cost has ripple effects in terms of improving access to books as they become more and more affordable. The hope is that this change in publisher practice will mean more books sales and higher turnover, the profits from which can be used to invest in more publications.

Major Considerations

Perhaps one should start by recognising that publishing—both commercial and noncommercial—is about decision-making, particularly about spending money. A publisher must decide whether an expenditure is an investment or not. If there is to be a return or outcome, what sort of outcome should be expected? In any case, a publisher would want to recover any expenditure and, at best, make more money than was spent, thereby creating value for sustainability.

A publisher will look at the long-term, medium-term, and short-term potential of the target population, sourcing facts and figures for relevant language groups and languages areas. The question is, Are the facts and figures readily available? This information is vital as a publisher examines its relation to border districts. It is assumed that the literate population will translate into a ready market, and this market will be viewed as a short-term prospect. However, the low literacy population also should be viewed as a potential market for the growth of a publisher's business. Educational and literacy activities create a demand for publications, yet the lack of a reading culture is an excuse most African publishers use to defend why they do not publish general readers. However, the reading culture issue must be viewed in relation to economic factors. What percentage of the African population has disposable income to spend on reading matter? Few people can

afford to buy books when incomes are low in these borders areas.

Africans have heard our Southern African Development Community (SADC) presidents say that the problem they face is food, but where is literacy ranked on the priorities list?

Role of Policies in Cross-Border Book Trade

The scenario about Zambia and Malawi on Chinyanja books is only possible because of the countries' similarity of policies regarding the textbook market; that is, both have a private sector-driven textbook provision system. What would be the situation for Mozambique and Malawi on the Sena, Yao, or Lomwe public? These two countries have different colonial and liberation histories, the result of which is that the two countries are at different stages of book trade development. Malawi has already moved to recommend multiple text use and has promoted text choices made not by government officials but by the users at the secondary school level. They are poised to recommend the same action at the primary school level.

If a Malawian publisher develops a book in Sena, are the present procedures of procurement going to allow the books to be used in Mozambique? During a visit to Maputo, Mozambique, in December 2000, I learned from a bookshop manager that the decision to purchase specific titles in that country is at the provincial governor level. This centralised book procurement is not compatible with the direction that Malawi has taken. How will this difference be reconciled? The issue of who decides what books to produce could be the result of who finances the procurement of the publications, but in the name of democratisation and empowerment of the people, these decisions should be revisited. Contributory schemes with support from the Danish Agency for Development Assistance (DANIDA) are functioning at the secondary school level in Malawi; and in Zimbabwe, schools manage their own book procurement. The existence of Sena texts published in Mozambique is a confirmation of mother tongue education in practice, and intra-African book trade is inevitably part of the wider process of globalisation. Trade barriers are falling, and there is a need for flexibility and innovation in business practices.

Partnership for Sustainable Growth

Both African governments and businesses need to be flexible, innovative, and highly responsive to change. Governments must look at the creation of enabling environments to support business. Policies that promote the local capacity in tandem with globalisation are a must. At present, African publishers' sales turnover in their own countries or regions is still small. It is widely believed that a thriving intra-African book trade will contribute significantly to the growth of book industries in Africa at individual, regional, national, and continental levels (Makotsi & Musonda, 2000).

Infrastructure and Finance

The book trade depends on a wide range of services, including finance, transport, and communication. Without efficient provision of these services, even the most competitive and creative publishers will find it difficult to produce appropriate products, let alone ensure effective marketing, speedy delivery, and efficient invoicing and payments across the borders of African countries. Currently, publishing in Africa is constrained by a lack of capital. For example, commercial banks charge interest rates that are unjustifiable for publishers because publishers experience slow returns on their investments.

Because of such difficulties, schemes for local language publishing may have to be created. In Kenya, for example, the Dag Hammarskjold Loan Guarantee Scheme has strengthened local publishing. In Zambia, commercial banks are being granted tax incentives so they can offer loans at reduced interest rates to small-scale enterprises. Norway has just instituted a lending scheme to Malawian writers for publishing.

A cash squeeze restricts business expansion and also prevents the extension of credit on attractive terms to booksellers. The role of libraries as buyers of books and as agents for promotion of reading has not been actively promoted. How many bookshop outlets and libraries are there in our cities? All this suggests that government has to actively encourage the publication of relevant books by making funds available to writers and publishers and providing well-stocked libraries in urban and rural areas.

Conclusion

Government policies on education, culture, trade, and international relations are paramount in encouraging publishers to invest. Various protocols —the SADC culture protocol, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa trade protocol, the growth triangle venture, and the SADC visa—will have a positive impact on the economic profile of the region and influence investment in cross-border language publishing because these protocols would remove barriers and integrate markets. However, this concept is a long-term prospect. The issue of harmonising orthographies and curricula also will be influential in encouraging publishers to invest in cross-border indigenous language texts. How quickly can this be done?

The real question is, Will the publisher invest at short notice without definite interventions from other stakeholders? Is there the infrastructure for book trade in border areas? Is there a hunger for reading? Can programmes be developed to promote and satisfy reading? How can local people be used to develop relevant materials for reading without compromising quality? What financing schemes can be arranged for publishers prepared to tread in risky areas of indigenous language publishing? These are the challenges that publishers, government, and textbook writers all must address.

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SECTION 4

Literacy Development for Special Populations

Development and Uses of a 100 High-Frequency Sight Words Recognition List for Children With Reading Failure

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Ghana

One cannot dispute that reading is essential to success in modern society. In fact, reading is a passport to knowledge, experience, education, and success in life. The demands for literacy (manifested by the ability to read) are ever increasing, creating more grievous consequences for those who fall short of literacy expectations. The encouraging news is that an impressive and growing body of authoritative opinion and research evidence exists that strongly suggests that reading failure is preventable for all but a very small percentage of children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1999).

However, the fact remains that there are many children in Ghana's schools today who cannot read. Many children who cannot read perform poorly in other academic subjects, get frustrated because of poor performance, and eventually drop out of school. In Ghana, the Free, Compulsory Universal Basic Education (F-CUBE) education policy for all children allows them to be in primary and junior secondary school for the first nine years, after which they write an examination for admission into the senior secondary school. However, the West African Examination Council (the examining body) reports that many of the children who apply to the senior secondary school cannot write their names, read, or understand the questions on the application. A study by Avoke and Donani (1996) reveals that 142 of 147 students in junior secondary school in Winneba, Ghana, could not read a primary grade 6 English reader. My own personal experiences working with children in Winneba confirm the severity of the situation and the urgent need to undertake some intervention measures to prevent such failure in the future.

In view of this situation, I was challenged to develop a 100 high-frequency sight words recognition list to help identify children with reading failure. Such a list would meet the need for a simple, informal assessment instrument that is culturally and ecologically appropriate for use in Winneba. The second challenge would be to provide intervention for those children who need it and to help children develop reading habits. The word list also would play an important role in remediation. With my special education student teachers, I set out to develop the 100 high-frequency words list.

Sight Vocabulary's Role in Children's Reading

Competent readers recognise many words instantly without needing to study distinguishing details. Such words are called sight words or sight vocabulary. Holdaway (1980) has observed that a large store of sight words is necessary for the development of fluent reading. Readers develop sight words as print becomes familiar after they have seen the same words repeated many times in different contexts. The reader notices enough detail in the sight word to distinguish it from other words and is able to store the word in memory for later use. As Combs (1996) notes, meaningful words are easier for readers to remember. The first words children are able to read are usually familiar words in their environment because they

have connected the distinguishing features of these words with personal experience through repeated exposure. In view of these observations, student teachers at the University College of Education in Winneba and I took the ecology of our environment into consideration in developing the 100 high-frequency sight words list.

How We Developed a Sight Word Recognition List

A group of 38 student teachers of the University College of Education in Winneba, Ghana, were involved with me in the development of the 100 high-frequency sight words list, and children ages 6–8 years old who were mainly in primary grades 1 and 2 were used for the exercise. Pairs of student teachers visited all the public and private schools in Winneba to collect data. The student teachers and I also collected copies of all the basal readers that are used in both the public and private schools and made a list of words that seemed simple enough for beginning readers to recognise by sight. Through discussions and storytelling, we made a second list of words that children commonly use in Winneba. When we combined the two lists, we had about 150 words. The next step was to trim the list to 100 words, so we pretested the list using children from the various schools in the municipality and deleted those words that most of the children found difficult to recognise. The final result was the list of 100 words shown in Figure 1 (see page 78).

When the student teachers and I compared our list with a similar list developed for Nigerian children (Umolu, 1985), we discovered that 35 of the words are common to the two lists (see Figure 2, page 78). This overlap emphasises that although some words are used frequently in English in any environment, the vocabulary used by children, even in a second language, is greatly influenced by the cultural and environmental setting of the communities in which they live.

How We Used Our 100 High-Frequency Sight Words Recognition List

The student teachers and I first used the list in Figure 1 to identify children with serious reading problems. We made flashcards with the words and tested the children's ability to read the words on the flashcards. We decided that any child who could not read up to 10 of the words should be selected for special education intervention.

Intervention

After selecting the children for intervention, the special education student teachers provided remediation for them for one hour a day for three to five weeks. The goal was to help these children build a bank of at least 100 sight words during the early part of the reading stage. The language experience approach whereby children learn to read their own dictated stories was the main method used with the students (see Umolu & Oyetunde, 1997). The sight words appeared in their experience stories, and the student teachers and I selected these words for the children to learn to recognise by sight. We provided two envelopes for each child. One envelope was labeled "I can read," and the second envelope was labeled "I am learning to read." The child's words from each language experience story were put in the appropriate envelope. We also used a variety of wordbank activities such as sorting words that start with same letter and/or sound. As the children sorted according to pictures and words, we tried to create phonemic awareness. The students matched the new words in their envelopes with the same words in language experience stories and in other print forms.

The schools in Winneba, Ghana, as is the case in most developing countries, lack appropriate reading materials. Therefore, I had the student teachers move a step further to write storybooks suited to the children's experiences to help them develop an interest in reading. The special education student teachers used our 100 high-frequency words list as the basis for developing storybooks for children at the beginning reading level. Through this activity, the student teachers wrote 71 storybooks and illustrated them with very brightly coloured pictures.

Measuring Children's Progress

After only three to five weeks of remediation, we assessed the children again using the 100 high-

FIGURE 1 Winneba (Ghana) 100 high-frequency sight words recognition list

1. a	26. Ama	51. deer	76. shoe
2. I	27. fish	52. eat	77. shirt
3. am	28. sea	53. food	78. up
4. it	29. net	54. aeroplane	79. snake
5. in	30. Kofi	55. baby	80. coconut
6. on	31. school	56. rice	81. banana
7. is	32. water	57. box	82. tree
8. to	33. man	58. the	83. television
9. go	34. woman	59. sun	84. her
10. my	35. hen	60. cup	85. his
11. he	36. egg	61. bell	86. run
12. she	37. door	62. bus	87. this
13. we	38. window	63. bird	88. sing
14. brother	39. book	64. one	89. rain
15. mother	40. dress	65. two	90. broom
16. sister	41. boat	66. cupboard	91. good
17. father	42. yam	67. teacher	92. bed
18. me	43. basket	68. bag	93. house
19. boy	44. ball	69. come	94. red
20. girl	45. look	70. sit	95. stand
21. dog	46. mango	71. no	96. of
22. cat	47. table	72. paper	97. at
23. car	48. chair	73. say	98. cry
24. pencil	49. chalk	74. sleep	99. doctor
25. pen	50. blackboard	75. sand	100. fine

FIGURE 2 Words common to the Jos (Nigeria) list and the Winneba (Ghana) list

a	she	table	her
I	we	eat	his
it	brother	food	this
in	mother	the	house
on	father	bird	of
is	me	one	
to	boy	two	
go	cat	no	
my	woman	say	
he	book	tree	

frequency sight words list as a posttest. There were very remarkable improvements. About half the children who had not been able to read up to 10 of the words on the list before our intervention now had a sight vocabulary of 30 words or more.

Conclusion

This experience has demonstrated that the 100 high-frequency sight words list continues to be a necessary tool for the identification of nonreaders who require special education intervention. The special education student teachers at the University College of Education use the list for remediation during their clinical teaching, and the list helps them conduct a program of word study that is developmentally appropriate for the children with whom they and I work. Our word list also is used successfully as a basis for the development of storybooks that are appropriate for our beginning readers and that enhance the teaching of reading and the formation of reading habits for children with special needs.

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Promoting Literacy Among the Visually Handicapped: The ANWAB Experience in Nigeria

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Nigeria

One of the greatest problems faced by the estimated 3 million visually impaired people in Nigeria is education. Blind people in Nigeria have found it difficult to cope in school, at work, and in their daily lives because of the lack of the appropriate reading and writing materials. Consequently, their exam results have been poor, and it has been hard for them to find work or compete with their sighted counterparts at work.

Because the blind cannot use print as a medium of acquiring literacy, the Braille system is the primary method blind people use to read and write. In Nigeria, special education for blind people did not commence until January 1916 when Reverend Forbes, who had learned Braille while on leave in the United Kingdom, returned to teach blind children to read and write in the Sudan United Mission's Freed Slaves Home in central Nigeria. In the early 1950s and 1960s, the missionaries who introduced special education in Nigeria under difficult conditions made strenuous efforts to ensure a modicum of literacy for the blind with regard to available resources. However, the number of blind people seeking literacy today in Nigeria has increased many times over with a consequent decline in the available resources. The education of a blind person is much more expensive than that of a sighted person. Whereas the sighted child only needs exercise books and textbooks, the blind child needs a Braille slate and stylus or a Perkins Braille machine, a typewriter, a tape recorder, and Braille textbooks. All these materials are too expensive for parents of blind children to purchase privately, so blind students often fail to acquire the literacy skills needed for success in examinations.

The Experience of the Anglo-Nigerian Welfare Association for the Blind

The Anglo-Nigerian Welfare Association for the Blind (ANWAB) is a nonprofit charitable organisation that aims at ensuring success in the attainment of literacy by the blind. With very limited funds, ANWAB has established an up-to-date computerised Braille production unit in Lagos, Nigeria, in order to provide much needed reading material for the blind. The association, in conjunction with Nigerwives, another service provider of educational texts, has produced over 90 secondary school and university textbooks in Braille. In addition, blind people in Nigeria now have the opportunity to bring to the ANWAB Centre any print material for transcription into Braille. For example, university students have brought in handouts and notes from their lecturers for translation, and students from the Nigerian law school have had their law handbooks put in Braille. Secondary school students regularly have their examination papers put into Braille. This service provides the blind student with the opportunity to read exam papers independently and reflect on the questions, rather than needing someone to read them to him or her. We believe that ANWAB activities over the years

have greatly improved the literacy skills of the blind in Nigeria.

There also are many blind adolescents and elderly people seeking literacy. The adults, especially those who lost their vision in adulthood, come to ANWAB to learn to read and write Braille. Learning Braille is especially difficult for adults because of the need to sensitise the fingers in preparation for reading the raised dots, and ANWAB staff are constantly seeking new ways of helping the adults develop a better sense of tactile discrimination.

A library of audiocassettes and Braille materials has been set up at the Centre, with the contents donated largely by the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C., USA), the Scottish Braille Press, and the Royal National Institute for the Blind in the United Kingdom, to whom ANWAB is truly indebted. The ANWAB Braille library has well over 2,000 volumes, and the cassette library has over 300 recorded materials. An average of 16 people use the library each week. Knowledge of the computer also enhances literacy among the blind, so we give computer training lessons to the blind by using speech software systems.

For ANWAB, enhancing literacy skills among the blind is a means to a higher goal—making the blind person independent. Literacy should surely lead to the empowerment of the blind so they can take their rightful place in Nigerian society and gain for themselves the rights that are due to them regarding education, employment, and social advancement. In order to back up the literacy skills acquired, the Centre ensures that the blind people who use our services go through a programme of training in mobility and orientation to enable their independent mobility. A blind person should be able to get to work and the market unaided and, as much as possible, should live life normally. Without training in mobility and orientation, Horton (1998) and Osinuga (1993) assert that the acquisition of literacy skills will become meaningless to the blind person.

Conclusion

The Anglo-Nigerian Welfare Association for the Blind has made an important beginning in the development of literacy skills for the blind in Nigeria, but we are merely scratching the surface. It is of utmost importance for the whole society—both the government and the private sectors—to ensure that the blind in Nigeria are given the opportunity to develop literacy skills.

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A Study in the Use of Creative Reading to Educate Gifted Students in Regular Schools in Gaborone, Botswana

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Botswana

In creative reading, the student reads beyond the text and in doing so develops his or her intellectual and creative potential. Teaching gifted children to be creative has become a necessity because creativity underlies every talent development.

This paper describes an experiment in the use of creative reading carried out in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana. The experiment's results indicate that using creative reading as a teaching tool is likely to maximise the potential of gifted children in both English and mathematics. It is suggested that if creative reading is integrated into regular school subjects, there will be no need for separate institutions for gifted students.

Review of Literature

Piirto (1999) identifies the following reasons why educators emphasise creativity in the education of gifted students:

- quantity as more creative products are required in the world of today
- equity because our talented students should be encouraged to develop to their full potential
- national and international competition
- pride and freedom

Creative reading as a means of fostering creativity is a process in which the reader regards any information as incomplete and, therefore, questions the text by becoming sensitive to gaps in information and not accepting information as facts. The reader also applies some of the information, thinks about its possible consequences, and generates several alternative solutions to a perceived problem (Torrance & Safter, 1990). The creative reading process also enables the student to discover something new and original that eventually contributes to his or her creativity. Giorgis and Johnson's (2001) views support creative reading: They maintain that children create their own stories, poems, and illustrations from books, and they also note that creative reading gives way to creative responses and the promotion of readers' additional research.

Critical Versus Creative Reading

Torrance (1995) reports a study conducted with Harmon in 1969 that involved graduate students in educational psychology who were randomly assigned into critical and creative reading groups to read a research report. The study results indicated that the students who read the research creatively performed better in tests measuring creative thinking and creative writing than their counterparts who read the research reports critically.

Gender Issues

Torrance (1995) also reports the destructive effect of gender roles in science discoveries. In a study involving science toys, first-grade boys performed significantly better than their female counterparts because the girls were reluctant to work with science toys. The reverse situation occurred when nurse's kits replaced the scientific toys, and the boys wanted nothing to do with the nursing kits.

Torrance admonishes that, in order to develop creativity both in males and females, gender roles should be deemphasised by both parents and teachers. Piirto (1999) notes that few females major in mathematics and the sciences.

The Educational Situation for Gifted Students in Botswana

Botswana, like many African counties, has no specific educational programmes for gifted students yet. There are, however, annual mathematics and science fairs where gifted students have the chance to present projects in their interest areas. These annual competitions are inadequate in meeting all the learning needs of gifted individuals (Biakolo, 2001). Moreover, gifted individuals need consistent programmes and services across the span of years that they are in school (Feldhusen, Van Tassel-Baska, & Seeley, 1989). Gifted students need nurturance on a regular basis, and creative reading, which can be applied in all subject areas, would go a long way in meeting their learning needs.

Acceleration and Enrichment

Traditionally, the major educational programmes used to address the learning needs of gifted students were acceleration and enrichment. However, a close examination of the programmes revealed flaws. Some of the shortcomings are that the programmes lacked consistency—gifted students had to wait for weekends and holidays in order to carry out some of the activities of the programmes. Moreover, the content, scope, and sequence of the materials were inadequate in meeting all the learning needs of gifted students (Harrington-Leuker, 1991; Kersh, Nelson, & Subtonik, 1987). The programmes earned themselves derogatory names as a result of the isolation of their activities from the regular school programmes and in some places the programmes were withdrawn (George, 1997).

Integration of Gifted Programmes With Regular Programmes

Scholars in the field now opt for integration of gifted programmes with regular programmes, and in this respect, Feldhusen, Tassel-Baska, and Seeley (1989) contend that the role of schools in handling content areas at both primary and secondary levels cannot be disputed. As Feldhusen and colleagues indicate, creative reading as a process skill could be integrated into all subject areas in the regular programmes. The curriculum for the gifted should be linked with content areas for easier conceptualisation and adequate focus. Accordingly, developing a process skill in students should be viewed as basic to the curriculum of gifted students and should begin as soon as they begin school.

The main questions addressed by the present study are the following:

- What effect does creative reading have on creativity, English language, and mathematics skills in gifted students?
- What is the effect of gender and the treatment of gender interaction on creativity, English language, and mathematics skills in gifted students?

Methodology

The design used for the study was 2 x 2 nonrandomised factorial designs. The layout of the table is shown in Table 1.

The factors were treatment and gender, each at two levels. The levels of treatment were a creative reading and a control group. The three criterion variables were (1) creativity, (2) achievement in English language skills, and (3) achievement in mathematics. Pretreatment and posttreatment were obtained for each of the variables. The population for the study included all year-one gifted students in 14 junior community secondary schools in Gaborone. The sample comprised 40 year-one students from 2 junior secondary schools with a total population of 510 students.

Choice of subjects for the study. The subjects for the study were identified through multiple cri-

Table 1 2 x 2 nonrandomised factorial design

	Treatment Group		
Gender	**Creative reading**	**Control**	**Total**
Male	10	10	20
Female	10	10	20
Total	20	20	40

teria. Initially, the first and second term results of the students were computed. Then, 60 students with averages ranging between 78% and 95% were selected from each school.

Pretests. The selection of the test subjects was followed by administration of the following tests:

- the revised edition of the Slosson Intelligence Test (SIT-R). Thirty students with a total standard score (TSS) of 120 and above were selected from each school. A standard score of 120 is high according to the 1991 SIT-R manual.
- a behavioural characteristics instrument (Morrison & Dungan, 1992). All the students took this test, and 10 males and 10 females who were rated with more of the behavioural characteristics related to creative thinking were selected from each of the schools.
- the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT)

Additionally, the subjects' continuous assessment in English language and mathematics and the previous examination results in both subjects were recorded to know their baselines in the criterion variables.

Posttests. After the creative reading treatment, the subjects were posttested with the TTCT. Their continuous assessment results for both English language and mathematics were again recorded.

The creative reading package. The creative reading package comprised reading activities and creative reading objectives, and the treatment involved lessons focusing on these topics. The creative reading objectives were adapted from Torrance's creative thinking process (Torrance 1979; 1995). In each lesson, the creative reading objective or objectives were highlighted with the aid of suitable reading materials. Students read materials of their choice and focused on the creative reading goals that were guided by the reading activities for the day. In these classes, the teacher was a facilitator who encouraged students to take full responsibility for their own learning.

The package is flexible, and one can start with any of the activities. The package is dominated by the following items:

- **Individual reading:** This practice gives students the opportunity to read books of their choice and focus on their reading interests and creativity objectives.
- **Interest groups:** These groups involve students who are reading the same books and materials. They meet from time to time in order to share their creativity objectives.
- **Sharing:** The entire class meets to share their creativity objectives.
- **Individual conference:** This practice offers opportunities for individual discussion and feedback. Additionally, one-on-one conferences provide a less threatening atmosphere in which students are offered opportunities for personal conversations about the books and materials that they read. The questions that are raised during this interaction help students develop a reflective and questioning attitude towards their reading selections.
- **Creative drama:** This activity is used to stimulate imagination, thinking, and problem-solving. Students produce, use, and enjoy fantasy.

The data collected were analysed using analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) with pretest as covariate.

Results. Table 2 shows the ANCOVA summary for creativity with creativity measure before treatment as covariate. As seen in the table, an *F*-Ratio of 250.664 with 1 and 35 degrees of freedom associated with main effect of treatment on the creativity measures is significant at 0.05 level of confidence ($F1, 35 = 250.664, p < 0.05$).

The findings indicate that the treatment had a significant effect on creativity and on achievement in English language and mathematics for gifted students. This data suggests that creative reading can be used effectively to maximise gifted students' performance in creativity, English language, and mathematics. The significant treatment effect observed in the aforementioned areas is similar to the effect found in studies by Biakolo (2001), Clymer et al. (1969; 1976), and Torrance (1979).

Perhaps one reason why creative reading increases the performance of gifted students in creativity, English language, and mathematics is the philosophy of creative reading, which encourages students to view all information as incomplete (Biakolo, 2001). This viewpoint motivates students

Table 2 ANCOVA summary table with pretest as covariate for creativity

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	*df* Squares	Mean Squares	*F*	Significnce of *F*
Corrected Model	5637.737	4	1409.434	83.872*	.000
Intercept	442	1	442	026	.872
Pre-creativity (Covariate)	891.237	1	891.237	53.035*	.000
Gender	17.1102	1	17.102	1.018	.320
Treatment	4212.323	1	4212.323	250.664*	.000
Gender* Treatment	181.995	1	181.995	10.830*	.002
Error	588.163	35	16.805		
Total	76743.00				
Corrected Total	6225.900				

*Because the *F*- value calculated is larger than tabled *F*1, 35, which is 4.12, gender as a variable did not have any significant effect on the creativity of gifted students ($F1, 35 = 1.018$, $p = 0.320$). The interaction of treatment and gender on creativity is significant ($F1, 35 = 10.830$, $P < 0.05$).

to read beyond the materials given and to make their own contribution, which is exciting to those students who are inquisitive by nature and long for opportunities to actualise themselves.

The findings also indicate that gender, as a variable, does not have any effect on creativity, English language, and mathematics. This result shows that creative reading does not discriminate between males and females as it encourages both genders to maximise their potential. It also shows that creative reading deemphasises gender roles.

Gender stereotypes portray males to be more competent intellectually and, in many cultures, mathematics and the sciences are portrayed as male domains in which females are not expected to do well. The nonsignificance of gender interaction in the experimental group as observed in English language is a breakthrough because languages are culturally accepted as being in the females' domain.

Conclusion

If exercises in creative reading are effective in the areas of English and mathematics, they also may be effective for other subjects that are offered in regular schools. Such experiences are recommended for regular students as well because the students also can use creative reading to maximise their potential.

There is a need to deemphasise gender roles in children at a very early age (Torrance, 1995). It seems likely that this change in emphasis would go a long way in improving the creativity of female students. To motivate females in male-dominated areas, mentoring is needed. Piirto (1999), citing women in the science and mathematics fields, recommends that mentors would be role models, intellectual friends with whom to discuss issues, emotional supporters, and contacts in a particular field.

Finally, if creative reading were integrated into regular school subjects, there would be no need for separate institutions for gifted students because their potential could be maximised in regular schools.

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Reaching Out With Literacy to the Youth in Crisis Areas: The Unique Experience of Karamoja, Uganda

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A Brief Background About the Karamojong in Uganda

Karamoja, Uganda, whose people are called Karamojong, is located in the northeastern part of Uganda and is bordered by Sudan in the north and Kenya in the east. The Karamoja plateau is covered with short and thorny bushes, which are more often than not reduced to a bare minimum by animals and human activities that leave the soil bare and exposed to the rigours of soil degradation. Generally speaking, the Karamojong lead a predominantly agro-pastoral lifestyle with a negligible percentage of the population having taken up wage-earning and petty trading. The Karamojong live in a highly fragile and precocious socio-ecological environment. An age-set system determines levels of authority, conduct, and ethical behaviour. Their lifestyle is labour intensive with an overreliance on child labour for domestic, social, and agro-pastoral activities.

Historical factors, the pastoral lifestyle, and the precarious socio-ecological environment, coupled with the cost and irrelevance of the national curriculum, have caused the Karamojong to develop a negative attitude towards formal education. To date, Karamoja has remained one of the most backward regions of Uganda, and the level of education in the region has remained very low. Only 20% of the Karamajong children enrol in primary schools, compared with 91% in Uganda overall. In addition, only 12% of the Karamajong are literate, compared with the national figure of 54%.

In other parts of Uganda, a lot of importance is attached to education for achieving rapid socio-economic transformation and national development. Education is presumed to be society's most important tool for achieving moral, intellectual, ideological, cultural, and social development of the people. It is hoped that through education, the Ugandan people can be liberated from the vicious circle of poverty, dependence, ignorance, disease, and indignity to attain an improvement in the quality of their lives. In many parts of the country, the impact of education on the quality of the lives of the people can be easily recognised. However, in Karamoja, school education has not made any significant effect on people's lives.

The real educational problem is that the Karamojong had an indigenous system of education that has been overwhelmed by the socio-economic, cultural, and political dynamics of the New World Order. The formal system of education has been introduced in Karamoja, and this has not achieved anything, either. Neither the indigenous system of education nor the formal school system can address adequately the needs of the Karamojong in the current circumstances. The national framework of providing education can neither meet the needs, interest, and aspirations of the Karamojong nor develop their pastoral lifestyle. What a crisis! The Karamojong cannot compete for local and national jobs in the social and political sectors for lack of educational qualification. Consequently, educational marginalisation, inequality, deprivation, ignorance, disease,

poverty, and underdevelopment have continued to reinforce one another to undermine efforts to improve quality of life in Karamoja.

It was obvious that formal education had failed to address the needs of the Karamojong and that an alternative system of education had to be established. The uniqueness of the situation in the region prompted the Ministry of State for Karamoja to initiate a task force. The task force identified education—especially basic education that most suited the needs and aspirations of the Karamojong—as priority. Once equipped with the necessary information, the then Minister of State for Karamoja approached Redd Barna (now Save the Children Norway) for support. Redd Barna agreed to work through the local education authorities in the Kotido and Moroto districts in the region to facilitate the provision of an alternative basic education for the Karamojong children.

The Karamojong elders, women, adolescents, and children expressed the educational needs and priorities that could make them function productively both locally and nationally and the mode of instruction that would recognise and utilise local expertise and methodology without disrupting their daily routines and pastoral practices. Between 1996 and 1998, elders, district authorities, and Redd Barna staff discussed and agreed on the most appropriate type of basic education for Karamoja. A special curriculum called Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja was designed based on the unique needs and conditions in the community. (See Bakehena & Jawolo, 1998.) The main components of the curriculum are education in livestock and crop product, environment management, rural technology, and home management. In addition, the curriculum includes teaching students about other parts of Uganda; the role of education in the nation; peace and security in the community; and health and sex education, including HIV/AIDS prevention. Thus, the subjects being taught are practical and of immediate relevance. However, there would be linkages with the formal system.

It also was agreed that the facilitators (instructors) must be chosen from among members of the local communities and that the communities must contribute to the welfare of facilitators, in addition to providing learning centres and space and ensuring that students attend classes. The Karamojong language would be the medium of instruction. Schools would go to the communities instead of communities coming to schools, and the teaching schedules would be arranged around the work schedules of the children.

Achievements of Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja

According to the *ABEK Review Report for Redd Barna—Uganda* (Odada & Olega, 1999), the programme has registered significant achievements in its first phase (1996–1999), including the following:

- Karamojong children who could not read and write when they first joined ABEK can now do so. For example, they can read and write instructions and letters.
- Some of the children from ABEK Centres have joined the formal school system.
- The children now are able to count and identify animals better.
- The children have become careful and conscious about the environment.
- Children's skills in handwork have improved tremendously.
- A considerable improvement has been registered in the children's behaviour among themselves and in the community.
- Communities have openly come out to support their children's education. When parents ask the children about what they learn, they realise that children are learning things that are related to their lifestyle, which has prompted a number of parents to go to the learning centres and watch the children learning. Hardly a day passes without a parent coming to watch children learning in an ABEK Centre.
- A number of the Karamojong have been recruited as facilitators, which has changed their lifestyle.
- The success of ABEK has attracted a number of international and local organisations in the area. A number of international organisations now compete to sponsor ABEK programmes.

At last, the Karamoja region has been opened up for development activities. (See Odada & Olega, 1999.)

Some Challenges ABEK Still Faces

A major problem ABEK faces is that attendance in the Learning Centres is not steady because of the need for children—especially girls—to serve as labourers and because of the migration of people from place to place. Also, ABEK needs more permanent buildings for the Learning Centres. The children learn under trees without proper classrooms, and their learning is disrupted when the weather is not favourable. Another problem is that some facilitators have to travel very long distances—up to 16km daily—and this travel has become a real burden to them. Additionally, the facilitators are drawn from the very low classes and are not trained to perform up to conventional standards.

Conclusion

The Karamojong experience demonstrates that for any form of sustainable literacy to succeed, it must be both relevant to the needs and aspirations of the community and flexible enough to suit the work habits and timetables of the people it is expected to benefit. Literacy programmes can prosper only if they are learner-friendly and people-based. In the case of Karamoja, the local population was consulted, and they got involved fully in conceiving the project's formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The Karamojong consider it their programme primarily because they have participated in all the stages of its growth and development.

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Teaching Reading in a Special School for Mentally Retarded Children in Zimbabwe

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Zimbabwe

Background to Vimbainashe Learning Institute (VLI)

Education is a human right. Although in policy the government and education system of Zimbabwe have embraced inclusive education, in practice, children with disabilities do not yet enjoy the educational support that children without disabilities enjoy. As a result, educational inequalities still affect children with disabilities across Zimbabwe. The general lack of resources affects and haunts all children, but the situation is more complex when dealing with mentally retarded children. Here in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, those groups whose existence, actions, and life events are assumed to have major impact on the shape and future direction of the nation are the major focus of resource allocation.

Several definitions of mental retardation exist, but most sources agree that it is a condition usually present before the age of 18 that results in below-average intellectual skills and poor adaptive behaviour (Slavin, 1997). Stigmatisation and marginalization in friendships and other personal interactions often affect people with mental retardation in school and community settings. My observations in Zimbabwe agree with the suggestion of De la Rey, Duncan, Shefer, and Van Niekerk, (1997) that there are different ways for black Africans to conceptualise the mentally retarded. For example, in both Shona and Ndebele, the mentally retarded are referred to as *vakaremara pfungwa/abalengqondo elimeleyo*, which means "those with injured brains." This description does not bode well for the mentally retarded in a country where people's perceptions of worth and value are largely linked to intellectual ability and so-called normality. Most schools in Zimbabwe assume that mentally retarded children are a homogenous group that cannot develop successfully.

Vimbainashe Learning Institute (VLI) seeks to cater to these children by side-stepping and removing learning barriers during preschool and primary school. *Vimbainashe* is a Shona word that means *trust in God*. The school is integrated, and currently, there are 38 students in the primary school and 26 in the preschool, about half of whom are not mentally retarded. By integrating students, it is hoped that the children without mental retardation will learn to accept the mentally retarded children in their midst.

VLI is very aware that no one characteristic distinguishes the mentally retarded child but that the different possibilities are valuable in indicating possible instructional methods. Therefore, VLI teachers seek at all times to plan individualised programmes for each child, focusing on his best ways of learning while using his strengths and taking his needs into account. Additionally, the child is seen as constructing his own knowledge.

Teaching Reading to Mentally Retarded Children at VLI

The teaching methods used at VLI may be usable for all children, but the particular application differs from child to child. The VLI curriculum focuses on both the content and the methods of reading instruction. As much as possible, VLI works within the confines of the law and offers the children the

government-prescribed curriculum, but the methods VLI uses have to be adjusted to suit children with mental retardation. The teachers spend a lot of time preparing their own materials that are homemade but suitable for use with students. Whenever possible for the students entering the preschool, the VLI aim is to prevent reading problems from developing later; however, there are still students coming in for remediation at higher levels.

In terms of curriculum organisation, VLI sees the need to plan with other professionals. As much as possible, VLI seeks assessments from psychologists and speech, occupational, and other relevant therapists as information necessary for placement of the students and programme planning. Likewise, VLI has always sought parental involvement in teaching as much as possible. This involvement includes the parents helping with their children's reading beyond the classroom. However, parental involvement can be limited because parents may not know enough about the best ways to help their children. Therefore, the parents also need to be taught because they sometimes undo the teachers' work instead of aiding it. For example, teachers teach the children only 10 words at a time, but when the children go home and their parents want to increase the number to 100, the pressure makes the children frustrated and resistant to work when they go back to school.

Regarding parent-teacher consultation, some parents do not bother to attend because either they forget or they are just too busy to bother. Some parents do not see any value in this consultation because they place less value on their mentally retarded children than their other children, and therefore, they see coming for these consultations as just a waste of time. Part of VLI's effort is geared towards helping parents put effort into being a part of the lives and learning of their mentally retarded children. This effort often has worked well, and parents begin to see their children in a different light, especially as they discover how much their children can be taught to do.

Teacher Development

The government's lack of support for VLI limits the programme's support to well-wishers only. The head of VLI seeks to empower teachers by encouraging them to use whatever skills they have been given and to access as much knowledge as possible to help their students. She seeks to impart as much as she can of whatever content her teachers need, and she trains them in the skills relevant for imparting that knowledge. She guides and counsels the teachers as they may need it.

VLI has trained staff for settings other than the institute. The staff's training also has ignited in the teachers a desire for more training in special needs education. Consequently, at least five teachers have found their way to England for further training, and several teachers have joined Zimbabwe Open University.

Language

Zimbabwe's language of education policy states that children should be taught in either their mother tongue or the language commonly spoken in their geographic area until grade 3 and in English from grade 4 upward. VLI argues that a second language puts pressure on the mental faculties of mentally retarded children, and the institute seeks to limit mentally retarded children to one language. Once enrolled in VLI, the students are spoken to and instructed in English almost exclusively, which will continue to be the case for as long as English remains the official medium of instruction and examination in the Zimbabwe education system. Only recently, VLI has conceded to teaching Shona as a subject because the grade 7 students often struggle with the Shona examination that is part of an important test at the end of primary school in Zimbabwe. Although VLI uses only English with the children, they do use their mother tongue from time to time between themselves.

Reading Strategies

Children learn through play, the manipulation of objects in their environment, and in interaction with others (Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1987), and VLI focuses on these activities. Wilson (1998) says that "observations of children's play behaviours indicate that the cognitive competencies of young children with disabilities and the way such competencies develop are more alike than different compared to those of typically developing children, what differs is the rate of development" (p. 99). Mentally retarded children need early in-

tervention—including play intervention—like all other disabled children; otherwise, this primary avenue for learning can get blocked.

Several teaching methods and strategies have been adopted at VLI. The primary focus of the training programme is phonics instruction, which is a way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships in alphabetic orthographies (Yopp & Yopp, 2000) such as Zimbabwe's. VLI largely uses part-to-whole phonics. The head of VLI says she has found that because Shona is a phonetic language, her students respond very well to this type of phonics instruction. Other teaching strategies include picture reading, talking books, creative writing, letter matching, word identification, and word building. The daily reading schedule at VLI may start with whatever strategy constituted the previous day's work.

Regardless of the strategy teachers use, they try to use some type of correction method. In response to an error, a teacher may say, "Not quite. Let's do it like this." Then, the teacher allows the student to repeat the trial. If the student is successful in following this correction, then he or she is verbally praised but not necessarily given any token. If a second error occurs on the same trial, the teacher says, "Not quite. Let me help you," and gives physical guidance to the student. If the student is successful when he or she tries to do the trial after physical guidance, the teacher praises him or her. It is important to note that to avoid frustrating the student, correction procedures are not given again and again. Even if the student is still not successful after the second correction, the teacher goes to the next trial and makes learning more a game than anything else.

Picture Reading

Many people who are mentally retarded do not acquire sufficient reading skill to allow them to communicate with others, make judgements about issues, and take appropriate actions from information gathered from print instructions. This limitation often prevents them from learning independently. Therefore, a limited picture vocabulary reading system, which is intended to provide an alternative to more traditional written instruction, is used with mentally retarded students at VLI. The main premise behind the use of this system is the understanding that pictures of objects represent real objects. The activity targets attempts to teach the students the symbols that represent common items, actions, and prepositions and get them to respond appropriately when the symbols and actions are combined with pictures of their names.

Teachers look for several things during these activities: Is the response acceptable? Did the student identify the picture correctly and clearly and perform the desired action? Remember that the action does not need to be skilled. VLI recognises some variations in picture reading, such as family differences in what some items are called. Whatever the teachers and students do in this activity plays a very important part of learning.

Letter Identification and Letter Sounds

VLI always tries to establish reasonable and achievable goals for the mentally retarded children by using small steps with a system of reinforcement for the achievement of each step. The teachers do not try to get the children to read words untill they master the letter sounds. When the children read the letter(s), the teachers help them and ask them to point out the *l* sound, for example. The teachers ask the children to find the chosen letter on a printed sheet of letters. Alternatively, the teachers ask the students to identify the letter in a given word (e.g., identifying the *b* in *ball*).

Word Identification and Matching

In another VLI activity, cards with pictures and names of the pictured items are scrambled and laid out on a table. The children are asked to identify the pictures by name (e.g, a ball). If they identify the pictures correctly, they are asked at the next stage of the activity to find the word on little word cards displayed on a table or from sentences presented on individual sheets of paper or in a book.

Word Building and Spelling

At VLI, spelling is taught as part of word-building exercises. These exercises start with simple spellings, which get more and more complex as the children progress into more complex reading. When the children are done making their word charts, the charts are usually hung on the classroom walls.

Creative Writing

During creative writing sessions, the children are asked to write stories about a picture. They usu-

ally come up with some written material, even if it is just one or two sentences.

Reading Comprehension

For reading comprehension activities at VLI, either the teacher reads passages to the children, or they listen to a story on a cassette tape. Sometimes the children answer questions verbally, but at other times they respond in writing by choosing the correct word from a list provided at the bottom of a worksheet. Still other times, the teacher allows the children to provide their own answers.

Actual Reading

Students at VLI practice reading words within and outside a given context. When the students read from books or sheets of paper, they are encouraged to place a ruler beneath the line they are reading to keep their place. When the students listen to reading, the teacher's skills are very important in evaluating the appropriateness of the students' responses to questions. Are the students correct on their first attempts, or are there self-corrections? The teacher praises self-corrections but scores them as incorrect and gives corrective feedback because some students watch the teacher's face to determine if they are on the right track rather than attending to the print as they read. If a student reads anything incorrectly, the teacher reads the passage and has the student imitate the reading. If the student incorrectly imitates any words, at the end of the lesson the teacher records words that the student needs to relearn.

Conclusion

As with all systems, VLI does not always work like clockwork. The school faces a lot of challenges, but the staff is committed to making every effort to enable the mentally retarded to develop literacy skills.

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SECTION 5

Improving Reading Instruction

Building a Reading Culture in Communities Where Adverse Situations Thrive

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The term *reading culture* is understood to mean the art of inculcating reading habits and interest in learners through conducive reading environments and copious reading activities. The term *adverse situations* is difficult to define because of its relativity: What is regarded as adverse in one locality may not be adverse in another. In this paper, the term means any situation where there is a dearth of resources (human, material, and financial), environmental conditions, and/or active socioeconomic and political support for the growth and development of reading.

Any study based on managing adverse situations can be controversial, and two opposing viewpoints often emerge. The first one is that adverse situations must be removed rather than managed. Adherents to this viewpoint see adverse situations as aberrations that must never be allowed to exist. They argue against managing large, crowded classes, for example, on the premise that governmental organisations such as national assemblies, houses of representatives, and senates never function or deliberate in large, crowded situations. Some people even believe that large, crowded classrooms are intentionally created by the government to destroy education. Another argument against managing adverse situations in the educational sector is that once the ministries of education, school management boards, and other sponsoring agencies become aware of institutional research-based workable solutions to adverse situations, the groups are no longer committed to the removal of such situations and may, in fact, intensify them.

The contrary viewpoint advocates managing adverse situations by designing coping strategies to promote learning in such situations, especially in communities where not much can be done to eliminate the negative conditions. The argument from this viewpoint is that the learner has to be taught because he or she is the focus of all educational systems, no matter the adverse situations. In other words, to be educated is the learner's fundamental human right that must not be denied on any grounds. Therefore, adherents to this viewpoint believe that an adverse situation should not deter teachers from instilling a meaningful reading culture in any child. Likewise, I believe that it is the responsibility of reading experts to devise realistic means of coping with adverse situations.

Examples of Areas in Which Adverse Situations Thrive

For the past decade, I have been undertaking a series of projects on teaching in adverse situations. The notes reproduced here were taken from my experience in both primary and secondary schools in some northern states of Nigeria during observations of various lessons, which involved the teaching of reading. I use the notes to illustrate the kind of adverse situations that can inhibit the reading culture.

School A. I visited five lower secondary classes in school A. There was no class with fewer than 80 students. The school managed to provide the teachers with one textbook each. In one class of 80 students, only 2 students had the English textbook, and in another class of 90 students, no stu-

dent had a textbook. In one class at this school, students were sitting on the floor, and in another class, the desks and chairs were dilapidated.

School B. School B was a girls' school. Some of the students were already married and in purdah (seclusion from strangers) but were allowed the benefit of education during the day. From a senior secondary class of 50 students at this school, 15 could not speak English at all. There were three students in the class who were better than the teacher in spoken and written English, so the teacher employed their services to teach the class. Apart from the three good students and the 15 non–English speakers, all the other students at school B were poor readers for whom the English textbook was frustrating.

School C. School C was a primary school with only two classrooms and a small teachers' office. Primary grades 1, 2, and 3 were lumped together in the first classroom, and grades 4, 5, and 6 met together in the second class. I asked the woman teaching classes 1, 2, and 3 how she managed to teach three classes at once. She confessed that she used to tell them stories from books, and whenever she was tired, she would ask the children to go outside and play.

School D. School D was a reading comprehension lesson in a lower primary class of approximately 90 students. First, the teacher read a passage to the students. I noticed at least one incorrectly pronounced word in every third line of the passage. After tediously stumbling through the reading, the teacher listed all the "difficult" words on the chalkboard and explained them one by one. Some of the meanings the teacher ascribed to the words were wrong.

School E. School E was a reading comprehension session in a junior secondary school 2 class of approximately 90 students. First, the teacher read a passage to the students. I noticed that a good number of the words were pronounced incorrectly. After managing to get through the reading, the teacher listed all the "difficult" words on the chalkboard and attempted to explain them. Some explanations were misleading, and class time was not sufficient to explain all of them.

The adverse teaching situations identifiable in the Schools A through E are presented in Table 1.

Those people who have interacted with teachers in many of the public schools in Nigeria will testify to the fact that my observations about the schools are not exceptional but show normal occurrences in the majority of the Nigerian public secondary schools.

Building a Reading Culture in Adverse Situations

At first, my research colleagues and I, who were working on the adverse situations, thought nothing meaningful could be done to salvage the situations. However, as we investigated the seemingly irredeemable circumstances, positive research-based

TABLE 1 Adverse situations identifiable in five schools

Adverse Situations	Examples
Large, crowded classroom	Class sizes ranging from 50 to 90 students
Few students with the English textbook	No more than five students in any class with the English textbook
No desks and chairs	Students in some classes sitting on the floor
Wide range of student abilities	The combination within a single class of students who could not speak English, were total nonreaders, were poor readers, or were capable students
Sociocultural differences	Married women mixed with single girls in a single class, with the married ones who were in purdah normally not allowed to speak in public
Multigrade classrooms	Three lower primary and three upper primary classes combined together in single classrooms
Teachers' incompetence in reading and the teaching of reading	The teacher in the primary school telling stories instead of teaching reading
	The secondary teachers reading a passage to the students instead of having the students read it
	The teachers' own poor reading ability and knowledge of English

strategies started to emerge. Primarily, these strategies demand teachers' initiative, resourcefulness, and creativity, which are best developed at the teacher training or train-the-trainer levels. Therefore, the strategies have been incorporated into the teacher-training curriculum at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, where I teach.

Coping Strategies for Large, Crowded Classroom Situations

- Use the diversity in a large class to develop a variety of reading interaction modes between and within groups of students who are young or old; brilliant, average, or weak; male or female. The groups sit in a semicircle around a single reading text.
- Develop diverse cooperative reading strategies such as making the students cooperatively read each paragraph of a text in nonsequential order. Then, have the students present the text in a sequential order.
- Have one group of students jointly produce a text to be read by another group of students (i.e., one group is the text producer and the other group is the text reader and reporter). Students in the first group cooperatively produce different texts by copying from newspapers, magazines, and so on.
- Incorporate distance learning principles into a class by developing different reading-study centres within and outside class situations and having the students themselves operate the centres. Rotate texts, reading tasks, and reading activities within and across the different reading-study centres. Outside normal reading classroom situations, organise the reading-study centres according to clans, compounds, or areas where the students live. Form separate reading-study centres for women in purdah. From a limited number of reading texts at the centres, a large number of students are reached through sharing, rotating, borrowing, and other exchange strategies.
- Read across disciplines by using old newspapers, bulletins, magazines, "throw-away" handbills, and so on to stimulate student reading across disciplines such as journalism, law, education, music, and medicine. Ask students to read all these materials and paste passages that relate to the various disciplines on a bulletin board or piece of cardboard. Make these boards available for other students to read.
- Develop a competitive spirit through reading by rewarding students according to the number of materials read in a week, a month, or a year.
- Display brief notes taken during extensive reading for other students to read so they become interested in borrowing such books.

Coping Strategies For a Lack of Reading Material

- If a passage is short enough, copy it on the chalkboard.
- Where possible, make a few copies of a passage to be read in groups. The photocopied passage can be cut into paragraphs to be read in groups (i.e., one paragraph per group).
- Develop different reading passages from old newspapers, magazines, and "throw-away" handbills to meet the demands and interests of the students.

Coping Strategies for Classes With Students on Different Reading Levels

- Teachers learn how to determine students' reading abilities and organise reading instruction according to the various reading ability levels while ensuring active participation across mixed ability levels (Olaofe, 1990). That is, instruction is organised in such a way that it provides for individual differences and no student is left behind.
- As a remedial measure for the poorest readers, engage these students in activities such as intensive spelling drills and dictation and immerse them in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities using language from school, the home, a club, the library, and so on.

Coping With Teachers' Deficiencies in Reading and in Teaching Reading

- Reading materials must be developed that integrate into a single reading unit what to read (reading passages), how to read (reading methodology), and how to teach reading

(Olaofe, 1997). Such a book deliberately assists the incompetent teacher in improving his or her own deficient reading ability at the same time as showing him or her how to teach reading effectively.

- Perhaps the most effective way to enhance the on-the-job performance of teachers at the primary and secondary school levels is through a mobile teacher retraining task force. These measures should be taken in addition to the already well-known specialised teacher training and retraining workshops and refresher courses.

Coping With Socio-Cultural Differences

Teaching reading in adverse situations includes making reading attractive to destitute people in Nigeria, a group numbering 6–8 million at any given time (Katagum, 2000). Women in purdah, refugees, female dropouts who are victims of early marriage, drug addicts, inmates, and the unemployed (an estimated 90,000 school graduates) also should be included in efforts to teach reading in Nigeria. Another important aspect of coping with sociocultural differences involves integrating the reading components of the Western type of education into reading instruction in Quranic and Islamic schools (Ibrahim, 2000). All these items are the unresolved areas of the current project. The challenge before all educators is to tackle these socioculturally induced adverse situations with the seriousness they deserve.

At my university, experience so far is not all success. Teachers who will be required to function in these adverse situations must be both properly trained and highly motivated. As reported by some of my colleagues, actual classroom implementation of effective teaching strategies is time-consuming but highly rewarding if pursued with vigour.

Proper planning, systematic plan implementation, resourcefulness, commitment, and improvisation by using inexpensive and/or previously discarded local resources are some of the requirements for building a reading culture in adverse situations. These objectives are not always easy to meet; however, the reports from teachers who have tried some of the measures are generally positive, as the following examples show:

> "With initiatives and resourcefulness I was able to make use of the low resource situations, large class [90 students] and mixed ability resource strategies to promote the language beyond the classroom."
>
> "Teaching languages in adverse situations, though a problem, is not a curse. It is a challenge to the language teacher."
>
> "I found the use of newspapers, magazines, handbills, and waste materials very useful tools to teach them; to get instructions across to all [75] students and to capture their attention was not an easy task."
>
> "After the treatment of the adverse situational strategies [in a class of 85 students with only 2 textbooks] there was
>
> - proper classroom management (control) by the teacher;
> - adequate concentration because the students were fully involved in diverse activities;
> - proper use of resources like old magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets where no textbooks exist;
> - motivation.
>
> The following were the problems I encountered:
>
> - the time factor—[teaching material for] one period had to be taught in two periods
> - to organise the programme was tedious and time consuming
> - lack of school support."

Conclusion

To say that adverse reading situations abound in Nigeria across educational levels is to state the most obvious information, and the situations' adverse effects on the reading culture of Nigerians are not quantifiable. I believe that the conditions in other parts of Africa are not much different. We encourage local reading associations to increase support for the promotion of coping strategies, which should not be seen as a way of condoning these ugly situations but rather as ways of helping the helpless teachers become more productive in promoting a reading culture.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to my 1997–2000 postgraduate students who agreed to try the adverse situational strategic measures. I appreciate their contributions and support.

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The ADEA Compendium of Successful Reading Projects

Sizakele Shongwe and Carew Treffgarne

Swaziland

The *Compendium of Successful Reading Projects*, which the Association for the Development of Education (ADEA) Working Group on Books & Learning Materials is in the process of developing, grew from several significant events that took place in 1999. The focus of the ADEA Biennale "What Works and What's New in Education: Africa Speaks!" meant that in preparation for the December 1999 meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, every ADEA Working Group had to take stock of what constituted good practice. During the same time period, the 1st Pan-African Conference on Reading for All during August 1999 in Pretoria, South Africa, drew attention to the network of innovative people throughout Africa who are engaged in different kinds of reading activities. Additionally, the ADEA Working Group on Books & Learning Materials had been engaged throughout 1999 in a survey of the book situation in Africa for Education for All 2000, which was initially presented to the All Africa South of the Sahara Regional EFA meeting in December 1999. The survey was later published as one of the thematic papers used as background material for the World Conference on Education For All in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000.

The conclusion that the ADEA Working Group on Books & Learning Materials drew, from participating in all these events, was that contact between people who had been taking the initiative in different kinds of reading activities could be facilitated by an ongoing database, which could include not only details about the salient features of a reading project or programme but also the basic contact people for advice and further information. The purpose of the database is to capture the features that have contributed to a reading programme's success. An important aspect of ADEA's mission concerning the improvement of the quality of educational policy and practice in Africa is to encourage the people involved in significant educational innovations to learn from each other's experiences.

The idea for a *Compendium of Successful Reading Projects* also was influenced by participating in all the Indabas (the Shona word for *meetings*) that the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) has organised in Harare since 1996. Irrespective of whether the theme taken for the Indaba has been explicitly concerned with reading promotion (as indeed was the case in 1998 and 2001), the policy conclusions that are derived from the sessions concerning policy and access facilitated by the ADEA Books & Learning Materials Working Group always have implications for creating a more favourable context for nurturing reading. For example, the ZIBF 1999 Indaba on Gender, Books, and Development specified that "the criteria adopted for selecting books to be used in school must include criteria that aim to portray girls and boys, women and men, in a balanced, gender responsive way" (Zimbabwe International Book Fair Trust, 1999). Thus, it was proposed that "provision should be made for all key players in the *book chain* to become more gender sensitive, so that they can develop, select and disseminate books which take gender issues into account" (1999). The ZIBF 2000 Indaba on the Millennium Marketplace recommended that "policy makers in Government should support

publishing and book selling as strategic industries for development by lobbying cabinet colleagues in order to reach consensus on tax breaks/tax incentives relating to book production and book selling" (Zimbabwe International Book Trust, 2002, p. 262), and the ZIBF 2001 Indaba on Changing Lives: Promoting a Reading Culture in Africa identified the specific responsibilities for reading promotion accorded to different stakeholders in the book sector (i.e. authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers, etc.) and the community (i.e. parents, storytellers, journalists, civil society organisations, etc.).

The ADEA Books & Learning Materials Working Group was organised to address the continuing shortage of the wide range of materials that are needed to stimulate learning both inside and outside school. The group has the long-term objective of supporting the development of book policies within the context of a coordinated strategy for the creation of a more conducive literate environment in Africa. Consequently, reading promotion is a major concern, with the Working Group seeking to encourage all key stakeholders in the book chain (including the public and private sector and civil society organisations) to make a collaborative effort to mobilise human, technical, and financial resources for this purpose.

Each entry to the compendium follows the same format (see Appendix on pages 103–104). The first section comprises a brief description of the project, including its goal, purpose, location, institutional affiliation, time scale, and source(s) of funding. The second section highlights the project's innovative features in relation to reading promotion and is followed by sections that focus on the quantitative and qualitative indicators of project impact. There is also a section on project/programme replication that seeks to establish whether the project has developed from a pilot phase to become a programme with a country-wide or regional impact and whether it is has influenced similar programmes in other regions or countries. The next section on lessons learned is designed to advise similar initiatives about likely problems or pitfalls. Finally, the compendium provides bibliographic references and contact details for people seeking additional information.

So far, the compendium has attracted entries from 17 countries with a wide spectrum of different types of initiatives, including the Children's Book Project in Tanzania, the Rural Libraries and Resources Development Programme in Zimbabwe, the Book Weeks in Kenya and Zimbabwe, Reading Tents, Read Educational Trust's whole school model of delivery, and Fundza's libraries. The programmes cover reading material in Poular, Kiswahili, French, Portuguese, and English. The list of programmes demonstrates the perseverance of a variety of creative, committed people in different parts of Africa who work long hours (often voluntarily or for very little financial remuneration) toward developing a context in which children and adults can enjoy reading. The significant trends are a holistic approach not only to reading development but also to reading material development, production, dissemination, and usage. The variety of links across the education sector that many projects have built are also impressive. The READ Educational Trust has extensive links with national programmes such as the University of South Africa, the South African Literacy Initiative, and Masifunde Sonke (a South African program whose Zulu name means "Let's All Read Together"). The Zambia Primary Reading Programme connects with the Initial Teacher Training programme, the Basic School Curriculum Development programme, the Primary Diploma for upgrading primary school teachers, the inclusive schooling programme (INSPRO), and the Zambia Community Schools Secretariat. The Book Café in Harare, Zimbabwe, is innovative because it combines books and performing arts within a café, and it is a community project in the way that it introduces and promotes new books and authors.

Each entry in the compendium is required to justify what has made the project or programme successful by identifying the innovative ways in which it promotes reading and presenting the quantitative and qualitative indicators of its impact. The responses made under the heading *Innovatory Features* tend to reflect the mission or philosophy of each project, with particular emphasis on the main target groups with whom the project is involved. For example, the Reading Tent concept pioneered by the Foundation for the Promotion of Children's Science Publications in Africa (CHISCI) in Kisimu, Kenya, seeks to attract children to the tent to motivate them to enjoy reading. The Reading Tent programme's aim is to

involve parents so the critical role of the home environment in inculcating a reading culture at an early age in children can be emphasised. One of Fundza's innovative features is a marketing strategy to raise its profile throughout Swaziland via a massive media campaign. The Zimbabwe Book Development Council used a novel approach in the 2000 National Book and Reading Week when it embarked on a campaign with the slogan "Adopt a School: Give a Child a Book" in order to shift the focus from children and their needs to the adult community and its responsibilities to the children.

The quantitative data in the responses inevitably concentrate on the number of books borrowed, produced, or sold and the number of project participants or users. Most compendium entries draw on a variety of different kinds of data to substantiate their success; however, because in most cases there has been a marked lack of the long-term funding needed to provide evidence of increased competence in reading, the most frequently cited indicator so far has been improved reading habits and greater interest in reading.

The ADEA Working Group on Books & Learning Materials will be disseminating the compendium in the form of a loose-leaf folder or file that can be updated easily at regular intervals and added to as new entries are submitted. The group welcomes any suggestions concerning obvious omissions from the compendium before we circulate the first issue in the series. Everyone who has contributed to the project will receive their own folder, which will be published in English and French (and possibly Portuguese) to promote the sharing of experience across Africa.

Although it would be premature to draw any firm conclusions from the 35 responses that have been submitted so far, ADEA intends to undertake a systematic analysis of the responses with a view to organising a seminar focusing specifically on the different instruments that have been used for measuring project impact. The Association for the Development of Education welcomes any suggestions regarding who would be interested in hosting this seminar, given that ADEA prefers to work in partnership with organisations in Africa that have similar objectives. It is hoped that this seminar will enhance our understanding of what makes a reading project successful and will indicate what has been learned from so many exciting initiatives.

Author's Note: In March 2003, the first edition of the ADEA *Compendium of Successful Reading Projects*, with 25 entries, was issued.

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Appendix

ADEA Compendium of Successful Reading Projects

Outline for Project or Programme Response

1. Brief Summary of Project or Programme

Please cover main purpose, achievements, target audience, location, institutional affiliation, time scale, and source(s) of funding.

2. Innovatory Features in Relation to the Promotion of Reading

e.g.:

- *New strategy?*
- *Previously neglected sector of the community?*
- *Marginalised part of the country?*
- *Community involvement?*

3. Quantitative Indicators of Impact
e.g.:

- *Numbers reached?*
- *Numbers participating (give annual breakdown)?*
- *Numbers of books produced/borrowed/distributed?*
- *Amount and type of support material?*
- *Breakdown of inputs from a variety of different sources (public/private/NGO/bilateral or multilateral funding agencies)?*

4. Qualitative Indicators of Impact
e.g.:

- *Improved reading habits?*
- *Increased evidence of reading for pleasure?*
- *Cross-sectoral links with other educational/commercial/media initiatives?*
- *Collaboration between a wide range of different stakeholders in the book chain?*

5. Project/Programme Replication

- *Explain whether the project has developed from being a pilot project to becoming a programme with a countrywide impact.*
- *Give evidence of its influence on similar programmes in other parts of the country (or other countries).*

6. Lessons Learned

- *Comment on any problems encountered.*
- *Give advice on what should be avoided or taken into account on when embarking on a similar programme.*

7. Bibliographic References

Please cite any article or book in which the project has been mentioned, i.e. author, title, date, publisher and page numbers (for article).

8. Contact Details

Full Name of Programme or Institution:
Contact Person:
Job Title:
Address:
Telephone:
Fax:
E-mail:

Using News on the Board to Develop Literacy in a Vacation Programme

A.E. Obot, E.P. Ntukidem, Bassey A. Okon, and Stella A. Ansa

Nigeria

The reading culture of any nation depends on its citizens' level of literacy. For example, the reading culture of Nigeria is closely linked to the literacy rate of the Nigerian people. Literacy opens the door to more food, employment, and even higher social status. Thus, promoting literacy, especially at the primary school level, should be considered a socially oriented investment that is guaranteed by functional primary education.

If all children are encouraged to read, they will internalize the benefits of reading by the time they reach adulthood. However, in Nigeria, reading is meant only for students in different learning institutions who are preparing to write examinations. In addition to this limitation, the nonreading culture in Nigeria is further promoted by the people's poverty level. People who cannot meet their basic needs cannot appreciate reading for leisure, and many Nigerian parents cannot afford to buy leisure books for their children or themselves. To worsen the situation, books of all types are very expensive; therefore, only the rich can afford to buy them if they are interested in doing so. From these factors, we can see that Nigeria—with its very low literacy rate—has a negative orientation towards reading.

Based on this understanding, a branch of the Reading Association of Nigeria embarked on a vacation reading programme designed to develop and nurture reading and writing skills in urban children. Children from different primary and secondary schools, including children with special needs, were registered for the programme and placed in groups of 20 children per class. The activities that the programme leaders mapped out for the various classes were designed to inculcate the love for reading in the children, who were expected to progress from reading to writing over the course of the programme. In order to encourage the children with limited abilities, the programme leaders used mixed grouping within the classes, the idea being to enable the children who could read and write to help the children who could not.

How We Used "News on the Board"

Although the vacation reading programme exposed the children to a variety of activities, the main learning activity was the "News on the Board." Each day the children told stories about their observations and experiences and the events happening around them. The following are samples of the news items given by four of the children:

> Adamaka said, "I saw an elephant on television yesterday."
>
> Seneb said, "My mother bought me a bag."
>
> Aniekeme said, "Today is my birthday."
>
> Idorenyin said, "I washed some plates in my room this morning."

The teacher wrote each child's news item on the blackboard and read aloud each word while writing it. Then, the teacher and the students read the news together while pointing at each word. After that exercise, the teacher selected some of the generative words from the "News" and wrote them on flashcards. Later, the pupils took turns matching the flashcards with the words on the blackboard and using the context from the sen-

tence to identify the word. Then, the pupils copied the "News" into their exercise books. In subsequent days, the pupils worked in groups on a variety of activities using the flashcards to help them learn to read the words and write sentences using them.

Conclusion

The activities conducted in the vacation reading programme were designed to help the participating children acquire language skills such as improved vocabulary, correct word pronunciation, and proper use of grammatical items (e.g., articles, tenses, and prepositions). Although the activities were designed to cultivate and nurture the love for reading in the children, they also exposed the children to the basic components of writing. To further enhance this skill, the children were encouraged to write about the programme. The programme leaders found that using "News on the Board" was simple, inexpensive, effective, and highly motivating to the children who attended the vacation reading programme.

Developing Literacy Through Reading the World and the Media

Stella A. Ansa, Bassey Ude Bassey, Eno Nta, and J.O. Okwe

Nigeria

Reading begins as "learning to read" for every school-age child, but in order for the child to enjoy the benefits derivable from being able to read, the skill must evolve into "reading to learn." According to Unoh (1969), "learning to read becomes a progressive development of skills ranging from recognition of verbal symbols to the interpretation and evaluation of material of great complexity" (p. 1). However, learning is not confined to the classroom alone; it also embraces life outside the classroom. In order to learn outside the classroom, children need to engage in extensive reading of novels, stories, and any other material of interest to them. To foster extensive reading, adults must sensitise and guide children to a healthy and rewarding reading habit.

The environment in which Nigerian children live and interact today is the environment of the new millennium in which the world is gradually becoming a global village. Outside the classroom, much of the information a child has access to comes from the mass media, especially newspapers and magazines. Therefore, the Calabar branch of the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) thought of a largely inexpensive and affordable form of induction for these "leaders of tomorrow"—a project called Reading the Media and Reading the World.

Newspapers and magazines are readily available from governmental offices, private corporations, newsstands or vendors, and even some homes. These materials can be used to facilitate extensive reading. The Calabar branch of RAN decided to use these items as a major component of its Vacation Reading Village in 2000. A total of 87 secondary school children participated in this programme, which spanned three weeks of holiday time and covered a wide range of activities designed to help participants develop effective language usage and comprehension inside and outside the classroom. Some of the specific activities that were the focus of the Vacation Reading Village were vocabulary development, literary appreciation, listening and oral skills, and writing and reading.

The programme introduced media reading in the second half of the three-week holiday, by which time the children had been sensitised and given practice in various language skills as previously mentioned. The children sat in groups of 10–20, and a pile of old newspapers and magazines were made available for free sampling by the children for about 10 minutes. Next, the children were given the following set of questions to answer:

a. Discuss in your group what you understand by facts and opinions. Then, turn to your newspaper and identify stories that are (a) factual and (b) opinions. Where in the newspaper are these items usually located?

b. Identify five Nigerian personalities and state why they are important.

c. Identify five foreign personalities and state what makes them important.

d. Look at the newspaper closely and note how many different features or columns you can identify.

e. Go through the newspaper and choose the story you like best. Write a summary of that

story so others will read your summary and appreciate why you like it best.

g. Were there any difficult words in the article? Use the context and/or the dictionary to determine the meanings of these words.

h. How many of the news articles are international, and how many are Nigerian?

i. Look at articles that use words in a peculiar way, and write down all such unique words. Show your list to members of your group and discuss together why the words are different. You may turn to a dictionary or thesaurus for clarification.

The children who participated in this programme were excited about the number and variety of materials they could read. The children were particularly impressed with their own abilities to recognise both Nigerian and foreign personalities. In fact, this activity inspired some of the children to want to be national leaders. Because so much of the news revolved around known Nigerian issues and persons, the activities were highly relevant to the children.

Sometimes the class was quite animated, but it was purposeful noise. The children assisted one another with a question here and there, but as they got into the spirit of the tasks, the initial cooperation was replaced with individual effort. This shift suggests that when a task is engaging, any child can be motivated to try to read.

The teachers provided minimal input after the initial instructions were explained. The tasks that they required the children to do introduced the students to the "six honest serving men" known as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* and also enabled the children to engage in summary, comprehension, and critical reading. By focusing on the register in any newspaper article, the children were encouraged to expand their sight vocabulary. In fact, some children even identified errors in their newspapers. The programme has demonstrated that using discarded newspapers to motivate extensive reading is an innovative way of turning waste to wealth.

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The Karatu Workshops on Literacy and Development in Nigeria: A Participant's Experience

Wale Adegbite

Nigeria

Karatu (which means "reading" in Hausa) is a nongovernmental organisation (NGO) whose aim is to ensure that every Nigerian child learns to read. By training people who are already active in the reading development field, Karatu's Training of Trainers programme attempts to bridge the gap between people researching reading methods and people working at community level to teach children to read. This paper reports my experience on that programme.

Karatu's work is based on the Training for Transformation methodology, which is well-known worldwide in the adult literacy field (see Hope & Timmel, 1982; McCaffery, Obanubi, & Sanni, 2001). Karatu adapts this methodology to the training of people who are teaching children to read: teachers, parents, Mallams (teachers of the Koran), Sunday school teachers, and others. The Karatu trainers are trained in a rigorous series of workshops that are adapted to the needs of the individual group of trainees, and the course described here was modified for subsequent groups.

Aims of Karatu

Karatu seeks primarily to develop and promote literacy at the grassroots level in Nigeria through the use of Community Local Facilitators. It operates nationwide and has an institutional affiliation to the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN). Karatu projects literacy as reading the word and the world. Literacy is viewed as an enabling medium for learners' development of themselves and their communities.

Karatu runs the following three main training programmes:

1. A Primary Instructional Methods in Reading (PRIMER) course of workshops in local communities with intensive classroom follow-up, covering all the basic reading content needed to implement the Karatu reading programme. This programme is not unique but is based on simple instructional methods practised in some of the schools in Jos, Nigeria, and documented by Oyetunde (1991) and in other RAN publications. The PRIMER course is structured by the specific needs of participants. Its aim is to make teachers and other individuals competent in teaching beginning reading skills to children by using child-centred methods.
2. A Classroom Literacy and Facilitation Skills (CLIFS) course for PRIMER graduates. This course situates reading content in the context of participatory methodology and also offers learning experiences in the areas of personal growth and interpersonal communication. The aim of CLIFS is to develop teams of Community Local Facilitators.
3. An advanced Training of Trainers (TOT) course for teacher trainers and others in training positions. The aim of TOT is to cascade nationwide the model of grassroots teams developing literacy for children and communities in local areas. The TOT course is the focus of this article.

The Karatu TOT Workshop Series, 1994–1997

The goal of the TOT workshop described here was to increase the manpower for effective literacy development in Nigeria by providing the trainees, who were relevant actors in the educational system, with further knowledge and skills about the teaching and promotion of reading in the society. This course was an intensive four-phased training programme with each phase comprising a full week of activities followed by at least six months of skills practise in real-life situations.

The first three phases were essentially oriented towards personal growth, acquisition of knowledge and skills on teaching methodology, and workshop facilitation. The fourth phase entailed co-facilitation with experienced Karatu facilitators in reading workshops for teachers. It also involved the participants working in classrooms with children.

Only two thirds of the people who started on the course were able to complete it because anyone who missed a phase was not allowed to proceed to the next phase. Training was focused on the process of experiential learning, exploration of ideas and feelings, and learning to work as a team. It was not possible to gain this experience simply from reading past workshop reports, and the only way for dropouts to continue was to join a subsequent set of trainees.

The participants were carefully selected and had among them nearly all the knowledge and skills necessary for organising an initial reading programme. The workshop was a means of sharing and structuring the participants' preexisting knowledge and skills. If any knowledge was lacking in the group, the participants had the research skills needed to look up information for themselves. They were able to identify areas in which they needed extra help, and at their request, resource people were brought in at various times to give presentations on topics such as proposal writing, rural development techniques, and nursery education. The next set of trainees made different requests.

The assumption behind the training was that in order to achieve Reading for All, there has to be a transformation of participants' attitudes and approaches, a searching out of the root causes of reading failure, and a focused attempt to remedy these problems.

Structure of the Workshop—Intensity and Commitment

TOT was a residential workshop, and the location was outside town and self-contained. Activities took place from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. daily, with a break of two hours for relaxation and lunch. In addition to work during the day, participants took home assignments, which they did overnight and presented as feedback the following day. As much as possible, the participants' attention was focused on the centre and distractions were not allowed. The workshop venue was selected deliberately to ensure full concentration on the tasks.

The key principles that guided the workshop emanated from the psycho-social method (PSM) theory propounded by Paulo Freire (Freire, 1972; Shor & Freire, 1986). This theory was developed to counteract the assumption that educated people are able to "enlighten" rural people and others who have not received a formal Western education. The failure of rural development programmes often lies, according to this theory, in the fact that regard is not given to the community members' own ways, knowledge, and intelligence. The method demands a cycle of reflection and action with new action arising from the reflection and evaluation.

The principles of the PSM, upon which Karatu is based, are that no education is neutral—it is used either to control or liberate. The workshops do not provide answers but rather pose problems. The high rate of reading failure in Nigeria is caused not merely by inadequate instructional strategies but also by social factors. Karatu trainers have a specialized knowledge of their own area, which is important because the social situation is different in northern versus southern Nigeria and in urban versus rural areas. Karatu cannot tell trainees how to ensure effective literacy delivery in their specific situation, but it can make them aware of some of the possible problems and facilitate them in thinking about how they, the trainees, can solve them. Participants attempt to solve problems through dialogue so the trainer is a facilitator of this dialogue rather than a provider of information. Relevance to participants' needs is fundamental,

and the content of the workshop is modified in accordance with the needs of the particular group of participants. Through reflection and action, the participants look for the root causes of problems, and through dialogue, they find means to treat the fundamental problems rather than the symptoms.

Karatu Evaluation of Literacy Activities

Evaluation is also an essential component of the PSM that the TOT workshops use. At the end of the cycle of reflection and action, workshop participants need to discover whether the activities in which they have participated have had the intended outcomes. When tackling a specific problem in the area of reading instruction, for example, participants may identify other problems that require a modification of the planned programmes. Karatu's reading programmes constantly are being adapted in reaction to real-life, local situations.

Evaluation in the Workshop Context

In the TOT workshops, evaluation took place at the end of each day, with a major evaluation at the end of each phase. Changes in the programme were made on the basis of these regular evaluations, and the next TOT series—in which the author was a cofacilitator—was different in many ways from the series described here. Decisions in the workshops were made, as far as possible, on the basis of consensus, and different groups of participants had different needs and interests.

Appropriateness of the PSM to Reading Instruction

The application of the PSM to the development of reading skills, methodology, and facilitation techniques integrates the knowledge and application of some other principles and approaches. Namely, the PSM recognises the Integrative Language Teaching (Howe & Tomori, 1980) or Whole Language Approach (Goodman, 1986), in which relevant aspects of the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are stimulated towards a whole learning process (Onukaogu & Arua, 1997). In whole-language learning, a central principle is that there is no isolation of process from use and that language is learned best when the learners focus on its communicative use (Goodman, 1986).

Karatu methods support a teaching/learning model that

- ensures that the learner interacts with a text not only by recognising words and decoding the text's content but also by constructing the meaning, and
- ensures learner-teacher and learner-learner interaction in the classroom in preference to the teacher-centred or learner-centred presentation (Adegbite, 2000; Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988)

Emphasis on process. Most methods of teaching initial reading that are used in Karatu workshops already have been discussed already in RAN's Literacy and Reading in Nigeria series (see Hughes, 1991). However, where Karatu is unique in its mode of presentation. Karatu participants have to become agents of their own learning, and because of this expectation, the workshop process is more important than the content. Karatu keeps records of all the participants, and the workshop facilitators are always ready to continue supporting them in the classroom, if requested. The facilitators continue to make information about reading available after the workshops are finished, and they are responsible for making participants willing and able to go on learning how to teach reading.

Reading itself is a subject in which teachers are more concerned with skills and attitudes than with knowledge. As such, it tends to get undervalued in Nigerian schools, where knowledge of content is usually emphasised. To become effective reading teachers in Nigeria requires a radical rethinking of the teacher's role, and Karatu workshops help teachers to undergo this transformation.

Difficulty in effecting classroom change. Experience shows that most RAN members have tried, through lecturing, to get teachers to learn how to teach reading; however, the attempts have not had the intended impact in the classrooms. The RAN members have come to realise that more than intellectual knowledge about reading methods is needed to make teachers teach reading effectively, and they have progressed to providing activity-based workshops in which teaching skills are practised. The workshops are usually stimu-

lating and enjoyable, and when the teacher participants are asked to evaluate them, they rate the workshops highly. Nevertheless, in the long term, the workshops seldom make much change in the classroom because the school system is too daunting. For example, classes are too crowded, the timetable is too inflexible, and the prevailing atmosphere in the schools is not supportive of change.

In order to transform the classrooms, the workshop participants first have to transform themselves into effective change agents. Karatu does not measure the success of a training programme by looking at the success of the workshop itself. Although evaluation of the workshop is important, more important is the continuing change within the participants after they have completed the workshop. Their implementation of what they learned in the workshop is the true indicator of success, and it is not easy to achieve or evaluate.

The need for strategic planning. Just as a well-conducted workshop is only the first stage in Karatu's work, so too an effective change in individual trainees is still not Karatu's ultimate aim. Individual classrooms where children learn to read may serve as models to other classrooms throughout Nigeria, but they alone are not going to change the literacy situation in the country. To achieve the major change needed in order to get reading instruction effectively introduced nationwide entails more than the transformation of individuals: It needs a concerted effort from all organisations concerned in eradicating reading failure. Therefore, in 2001, Karatu held a National Planning workshop for all its TOT graduates along with representatives from its CLIFS workshops. A total of 60 people met to prepare a strategic plan for Karatu, and that plan is still in the process of being implemented.

Conclusion

The task of bringing the knowledge and expertise of RAN members down to the grassroots level is daunting. Nonetheless, the interest in teaching reading is taking root in Nigeria, and in Karatu, we believe that with time and persistence it will continue to spread.

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Producing Materials in the Classroom: The Karatu Big Book Production Experience

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The dearth of reading materials is one of the most serious problems many Nigerian primary school teachers face. Even when materials are available, not only is the quantity inadequate but often the contents also are far removed from the learners' backgrounds. The lack of variety in the range of reading materials adds to the problems of teachers and, consequently, reduces learners' interest and motivation to read.

Aware of this situation, the authors embarked on the production of teacher-made Big Books through Karatu (which means "reading" in Hausa), a nongovernmental organisation devoted to inservice teacher training. This paper reports on what arguably may be regarded as Karatu's success story for providing reading materials in the classroom. The program has introduced teachers in five schools (four private and one public school) in a southeastern Nigerian city to the skills of producing and using Big Books in their classrooms. What is striking in the enterprise is that the production of Big Books involves sharing and the use of Big Books in shared reading.

Although the Big Book has been very popular in some countries that enjoy high literacy levels (see Holdaway, 1979; Oyeneye, 1991; Rasinski & Fredericks, 1991; READ; 1996), the use of the Big Book is still relatively new in Nigeria. Hughes's (1993) report on the use of Big Books among nursery school children in Jos (a city in north central Nigeria) appears to be the first publication about the experimental use of Big Books in Nigeria. In the report, Hughes reveals that the experimental group who used Big Books showed a greater improvement in reading than the control group.

When introducing the concept of Big Books, the READ Educational Trust notes that they "present young learners with opportunities for language and reading development through shared book experience in the classroom" (READ Educational Trust, 2001). This, perhaps, accounts for the popularity of Big Books in countries such as South Africa, the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Because published Big Books are not readily available in Nigeria, it is important for teachers to learn how to produce them in their own classrooms.

Producing a Big Book

One of the joys of producing a Big Book in the classroom is that materials for the book's production can be obtained locally and at a reasonable cost. In Karatu workshops, we show the teachers how they can make a Big Book that is based on a small storybook. When there is no published storybook available, the teachers can create Little Books by generating stories from current events or by using simple stories told by the students. The Little Books now become the basis for the production of a Big Book. The books' pages can be made from the backs of old wall calendars, children's drawing books, or newsprint. We show the teachers how to break the story into pages and guide the children to arrange the text and pictures on each page, allowing for the display of large pictures and bold writing that can be seen and read by all children in the class. We encourage the teachers to involve the children in the book's

production as much as possible, including drawing the pictures and copying the text onto the pages.

Using the Big Book

After the teachers produce their Big Books on their own or with their classes, they can enjoy the fruits of their labour. We show the teachers how to position the book centrally where pupils can see both the pictures and the print. If a teacher produced the book alone, he or she learns how to introduce the story in an interesting way and read it while pointing at the words. In subsequent readings, the children are invited to "read" along with the teacher, and later, individual children can play the role of the teacher.

Our Workshops and Follow-Up Observations

Approximately 50 teachers from five schools have been exposed through workshops to skills on the production and use of Big Books and Little Books. The workshop duration varied from one to three days. After the workshop, we visited the teachers in their schools to see how they were applying what they had learned. Generally, we observed that teachers were quite enthusiastic and made determined efforts to produce and use Big Books in their classrooms. Unfortunately, we also discovered that the excitement and receptiveness of the teachers often was threatened by school leaders who were resistant to change.

Despite these circumstances, we found that a total of 59 Big Books were produced in the five schools that took part in our project. Remarkably, 30 of the books were made by the only public school in the group. This information was surprising because it was extremely difficult to launch a workshop in any public school because of incessant strike actions, which at times paralysed the primary school system. So, what accounted for the large number of Big Books produced? We are inclined to think that because the workshop was organised in the school with all the headteachers in attendance, it is possible that the teachers' enthusiasm was supported by official approval, encouragement, and supervision. We also think that the realisation that books could actually be produced at little or no cost in such a relaxed and fun-filled environment stimulated the teachers' excitement and determination to supplement the usual lack of reading materials in public schools.

Regardless of the number of Big Books produced at a particular school, the project participants' overall impression is that the Big Book is a very useful reading tool in a teacher's hands. Specifically, teachers told us that the Big Book could do the following:

- arouse children's interest in reading
- make children enjoy reading
- motivate children and make them happy
- create students' eagerness to participate in class
- help children use their leisure time meaningfully and settle down after break or recreation periods
- teach children to read new words

The teachers' responses underscore the value of Big Books for initial literacy development as opposed to relying solely on a textbook reader to teach reading. We feel strongly that efforts should be made to train many more teachers to produce and use Big Books in their classrooms.

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Multiple Roads to Literacy

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No single road to becoming literate exists. As I read the work of those people who have studied children's literacy development in many places in the world and as I consider the children who have informed my literacy development research—including the literacy learning of my own children and grandchildren—I am convinced that it is extremely important to legitimatize the concept of multiple roads to literacy. There is a tendency in the popular press, in schools, and in family literacy programs to consider that all people become literate in a similar way. In much of the literature about how children learn to read and write, undue emphasis is placed on the notion that the major or only road to literacy learning occurs when parents read aloud to their children. This idea suggests to society at large that being read to is the only aspect of literacy that counts as an influence on children's literacy development, and the belief becomes embedded in the culture.

Such a belief places a heavy responsibility on families who do not participate in read-aloud experiences regularly in the home, and they often accept the notion that because they do not read aloud to their children, they are irresponsible and the cause of their children's lack of literacy. I want to dispel the notion not to diminish the importance of reading aloud as one road to literacy development but to document that there are many equally important but different ways in which children are immersed in events that positively influence their literacy development. I believe that it is not reasonable and is actually dangerous to expect all families to follow the same prescriptions in order for literacy learning to occur among their children.

Those people who speak to families and communities about literacy development, who plan literacy curricula for schools, or who publish literacy materials must be knowledgeable about the literacy events that occur in a wide range of households. As the variety of literacy experiences in different homes are acknowledged and respected, families come to believe that these events are legitimate roads to literacy learning. Schools and publishers also must respond with sensitivity and respect for the many different ways people use literacy. The materials they publish and the curricula they develop should help parents and communities appreciate that they can involve their children in the cultural literacy events of their homes and communities and support literacy development at the same time.

In this paper, I describe some of the many roads to literacy that children take and then discuss what can occur when these multiple roads are not recognized or considered legitimate for literacy development.

Certainly, being read to by parents, grandparents, teachers, siblings, and other caregivers establishes one kind of context in which children are engaged and immersed in the process of becoming full-fledged members of a literate community. However, immersion in the connected discourse involves other texts besides books for children. Daily newspaper or magazine reading is a ritual in many households, and children see, hear, and often participate as family members share news and advertisements, decide what movie to attend, or choose where to do the family shopping. Some families read comics, and other families share notes or letters from family members or friends. Also, some families participate in Bible reading on a regular basis, and young children are included both in the oral reading and the interpretations that follow it.

The writing road to literacy development often occurs simultaneously with the reading roads. Families write letters, notes, and special occasion cards—sometimes in more than one language—to family members in distant places. In households, family members take phone messages and leave notes on pillows, tables, or refrigerator doors. Children see homemade posters and signs and are often encouraged to be part of the writing experiences that take place incidentally in their homes and in community settings. With the understanding that literacy in one language is helpful to literacy learning in another language, the bi- and multilingual nature of writing (and reading) in some homes takes on an importance that often goes unappreciated.

Within the home and the community, a survival road to literacy exists. This road includes all the reading and writing done to take care of health issues, business transactions, and the general goods and services necessary for the well-being of the family. One example is reading in order to understand the limitations listed on cleaning materials or medicines. Additionally, the family may collect and organize coupons or trading stamps, which involves literacy skills. People who use busses or are job hunting, paying bills, or applying for schools or other kinds of care also are involved in important literacy transactions. While shopping, family members may be involved in reading and writing lists or scrutinizing labels to discover the best buy or the healthfulness of the food, and their children are often at their sides observing—and sometimes playing at or participating in—the same kinds of experiences. In bilingual homes or homes of new immigrants, children are often the "culture brokers" who are asked to read and interpret official letters and proclamations that parents or the extended family believe they are not understanding. All these examples show how the survival road to literacy plays a role in the home environment.

Playing at literacy is another undervalued road to learning. Children love to pretend to do the things that adults do. Children pull pencils and pens from their parents' purses or pockets to write bills, receipts, menus, or recipes. They write tickets for the plays they perform, faxes to send for "business" purposes, and worksheets to use while playing school. When parents and teachers allow children to have easy and open access to reading and writing opportunities in their play, literacy learning expands.

Environmental print is another road to literacy. In my print awareness research with very young children, I have discovered that—at least by age 3 and for many children, much earlier—children have been attending to and are aware of the functions of the print that is an integral part of their home and community environments. When I asked teachers and graduate and undergraduate students to reflect on their personal literacy biographies, it was not uncommon for some of them to be consciously aware of the impact that a variety of print contexts had had on their early reading. Some teachers and students remembered being intrigued by the print in supermarkets or malls. They vividly remembered a particular street sign because it made the connection with their name, or they remembered a special connection between some aspects of their lives and a specific supermarket sign or billboard. These types of environmental print influence children from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Colleen, a working-class adult and avid reader who I interviewed extensively about her literacy learning, often moved as a child with her parents as they drove from place to place looking for work. Her early reading memories include sitting in the front seat of the car helping her mother or father—depending on who was driving—search for small towns on maps and find the appropriate signs that led them to their next destination. Colleen also reported the importance to her literacy history of seeing others read (and write). I call this process the demonstration road to literacy. Colleen clearly remembers that her mother was always immersed in reading mysteries and other novels. The messages about literacy in her family were loud and clear. Not only did reading serve the important functions of daily survival but it was also an engaging and pleasurable task that people did silently and alone. Colleen is never without a book and often takes a break to read between her chores as a housekeeper.

Marilynn, an undergraduate preservice teacher was aware that her mother, her older brother, and older sister were annoyed whenever they had to read to her, so she began to read in self-defense: "I knew that if I could read by myself, I would be able

to enjoy books like my mum did. She was always immersed in a book. Even in the kitchen, she would be reading and beating eggs at the same time." Everyone in Marilynn's family breathed sighs of relief when prior to kindergarten she was reading on her own. This road to literacy involves active observation of others reading and writing, demonstrating the value that independent, silent reading or writing serves. Biographies of personal literacy histories of university students and working-class readers often include comments similar to the following:

> "My mother reads so much."
>
> "My father had to have quiet to read the newspaper; then he would sometimes share the news with us at breakfast."
>
> "My dad was always at the computer writing letters, but mostly he wrote stories which he read to us if we played quietly at his side."

The technological road to literacy comprises all the written language that family members transact with computers, video games, and television and involves both reading and writing events. New information networks are adding to the literacy learning of increasing numbers of people who have access to technology. This idea brings to mind a bus ride I took during a trip to a rural mountain community in Colombia. The bus was filled with *campesinos* (country folk) traveling with their produce for sale to the marketplace of the next small town. As I observed this scene, I formed a picture of an early time in American transportation history. Yet, tucked into the corners of the bus was a television set showing videos of commercials, news, and other programming, which involved print media. The young people are comfortable with the new technology that involves a variety of reading and writing experiences serving a range of functions.

Family literacy traditions are another road to literacy learning. Families who gather around a musical instrument with songsheets or books to sing together, who read the Bible at regular times at home or in church, or who participate in performing comics every Sunday morning are engaging in the family literacy tradition. In some families, the members write stories or keep diaries together. In my family, the children and grandchildren look forward to the time when they can read from the Hagaddah written in Hebrew, English, and Yiddish at Passover. At age 3 or 4, the children learn their parts for oral presentation and read from the scripts. Eventually, the children are equally a part of the Jewish family tradition of reading the Hagaddah during the family Seder. Such literacy traditions are integral to daily family and community life, and the children and adults simply take for granted that they will participate as literate members of the culture, usually without conscious thought about an event's impact on literacy development.

There are many unique and personal literacy experiences that provide different roads to literacy. Each household has unique literacy experiences about which schools and researchers are often unaware. For example, one woman remembers learning to read with her dad as they were cooking. He would have her read the recipes with him, and when she was successful, she got a piece of dough to make her own cookies. A working-class reader remembers working with his father to fix their car and looking up car parts in a catalog so his father could order the parts by mail. A number of research reports document such individual literacy experiences. Hartle-Shutte (1988) reports a proficient Navajo reader in the fifth grade who learned to read by watching both television commercials with words and the credits at the end of movies (p. 229). Hildreth (1941) documents the literacy development of a child named Phillip with her longitudinal study of his train drawings from 2-and-a-half to 11 years old. Although the major focus of her study is on art as a symbol system, Hildreth examines how writing becomes embedded in Phillip's train drawings. His writing increases over time, and he not only labels features of his drawings but also uses writing to provide instructions and narratives to accompany his artwork.

Careful documentation of the literacy histories of people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including students in teacher education programs and children, reveals various roads to literacy development. Each road—being read to and participating in reading from books and other forms of connected discourse; writing alone or with others; playing at using literacy; making appropriate use of technology, environmental print,

and survival literacy; watching others read and write; family and personal literacy traditions; and involvement in sign systems other than written language—becomes part of the literacy history of each member in a highly literate society. Most literate people travel more than one of these roads to literacy, and traveling such roads helps most children and adults become successful readers and writers who learn to use literacy in a range of ways for work or pleasure. Additionally, the multiple roads to literacy are accompanied by shared discussions among family members and friends. For example, flyers are questioned, letters from teachers and principals are explained, and memos and prescriptions from medical centers are thoughtfully discussed.

Many of the roads to literacy are taken for granted by members of a literate society, who do not consider the roads' importance to the literacy development of the children and adults in a community. In fact, people have a tendency to give the credit for literacy learning to more academic events such as being read to, writing a story, or being taught to read and write in school settings. When the range of literacy events that occur regularly, daily, and often incidentally in homes and communities are recognized as important aspects of literacy learning, then it is likely that the people in those families and communities will come to realize that their reading and writing experiences are rich reservoirs for literacy learning because children are actively involved in the experiences. Again, I emphasize the importance of acknowledging and making conscious the ways in which these experiences count as literacy events in the daily life of a family or community and to continue to research and document the impact of these events on literacy development.

When the Multiple Roads Concept Is Not Conscious

Conscious acknowledgement of and legitimacy for the multiple roads to literacy is important because the same roads to literacy that influence the literate members of the society are also responsible for the attitudes about literacy learning held by the children and adults who do not see themselves as successful literate members of society. There are children who have literacy experiences that lead to uneasiness with the processes of literacy. The children may not be the kind of "good" readers measured by standardized or reading tests, and therefore, they do not believe that the literacy events in their lives have any academic importance. Often, their parents and teachers corroborate their beliefs through a variety of speech and actions. There are children who participate actively with literacy events through watching television, playing video games, fixing cars, cooking food, responding to environmental print, and so on who never value their literacy because no one helps them understand that they are already readers and writers. There are children who use literacy as peripheral events to activities such as hiking or other sports, musical ensembles, drama, or art, who seldom recognize the rich literacy events that are a subtle but integral part of their life experiences. Too many parents tell tragic stories about their children who have been eagerly reading and writing at home only to cease these activities as they enter school and learn that reading and writing are narrow literacy practices such as lesson routines or specific writing formations. Such children often come to believe that the literacy establishment does not value them and that what they read and write does not count as literacy.

Therefore, it is necessary to help individuals recognize and value their unique literacy experiences. Teachers can play an important role in helping such students identify the rich literacy experiences in their lives. Parents and community members can be brought to recognize and value the myriad literacy events unique to their cultures.

Conclusion

I would like to share a language story to provide evidence for the message I am conveying in this paper. Often when I fly to various conferences or consultancies, the person sitting next to me on the airplane becomes interested in the children's book I am reading or the manuscripts or journals to which I am responding. When the various people—often successful business folks and professionals—discover that I am interested in how people learn to read and write, it is not uncommon for them to agree that they are not readers and writ-

ers. I've been told this by a nuclear engineer and a neurosurgeon, among others.

The latest such person was a successful jeweler. He was loquacious, and I quickly learned how successful and proud he is of creating unique jewelry. He involves his customers in making sketches so he can incorporate their visions and interests into his creations for them. However, he kept telling me that he could neither read nor write. He said that his employees write his letters for him and that his wife keeps his financial records. As we talked, I became aware that he was a well-read person. He talked about the influence of Robert Heinlein's books on his view of life, about the Christian concepts that he has been exploring with his pastor in a Bible study group, about the latest black hole theory he had read in *Omni* magazine, and about the insights he was gaining from chaos theory. When I pointed out all the reading and writing he was doing—labeling jewelry designs, organizing information about gems for his customers to read, knowing the technical information and common labels for a wide range of gems and metals, ordering hotel rooms and airline tickets for himself and his family, and discussing theories about the world that came from books and magazines he was reading—he repeatedly said that he knew he was creative, but he was not a capable reader or writer. Even when I asked him how he got a master's degree in psychology without being able to read and write, he said, "I think they wanted me to get the degree because they recognized that I was creative. They overlooked how I wrote papers and a lot of my spelling problems."

In a highly literate society, this creative artist actively participates in literacy events all the time, but his many roads to literacy have not been made visible to him and have not allowed him to understand himself as literate. He does not count the reading and writing he does in his work and daily life as literacy. He does not appreciate these activities as important aspects of his literacy learning, and these beliefs influence his attitude about himself as lacking literacy. Therefore, he does not capitalize on the literacy he uses to the degree that he might so he can value it and himself. In order to fully understand the importance of legitimatising the multiple road to literacy concept, educators involved in family literacy have to take into consideration the attitudes about being literate that are articulated by people such as the creative jeweler, the physicist, the surgeon, and the children and adolescents who are struggling because of their views about themselves as nonfunctioning readers and writers.

Considering the lack of appreciation for the multiple roads to literacy concept helps explain how the same phenomena—and sometimes even the same context for different readers and writers—produce people who consider themselves differently literate. What and how people learn leads them to their views of themselves.

The multiple roads concept includes many literacy processes such as reading and writing in different contexts and for a variety of functions and purposes. These functions grow from the family experiences of each literate being and reflect the unique ranges of experiences and opportunities within the cultural context of the family and community. The roads to literacy are nourished by tangible art forms, music, and other communicative systems; they are nourished by the talk that surrounds literacy events, reflecting attitudes about literacy use. Those of us concerned with family literacy are in a unique position to demonstrate for each family the possibilities that exist in their daily lives and to help them see how these experiences define them as literate members of society.

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Upgrading Reading Instruction Through Teacher Study Groups

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Teacher study groups are comprised of practising or preservice teachers who explore issues in education that will positively affect their classroom practices. The group's purpose is to provide an incentive for teachers to expand their knowledge base in the education field so changes they make in their own teaching will be based on sound theoretical, philosophical, or practical decision-making. I believe that understanding the reasons why we teachers do something in our classrooms is essential to good teaching, and learning in a dialogue group is a problem-solving strategy.

I began incorporating teacher study groups in my teaching at the College of St. Joseph in Rutland, Vermont, because I recognised a need for teachers in my postgraduate classes to have an opportunity to develop their own questions and set the purpose for their assigned readings. At the same time, I felt the need to encourage my students to select their own texts for reading because I wanted to acknowledge their different interests and requirements. I began by asking them to identify their beliefs about children and learning. I wanted to value my students' experiences, recognise their background knowledge, and create a learning environment that was meaningful and purposeful for them. Teacher study groups provided a structure that promoted an exchange of ideas in a classroom not dominated by me as the professor or by the texts that my students or I chose to read. The dialogue that occurred in these groups created an atmosphere in which we learned from each other. My role as a teacher educator changed to the role of learning facilitator. This work began with teacher-led discussion but quickly moved to participant-led dialogue and became an integral part of my teaching and an integral part of the teacher inquiry that I believe is important for education to move forward in the 21st century.

I needed to have some accountability within the discussions that were taking place in the class because I was the professor. I organized a basic structure that I called "literature study" to guide the groups, which were made up of four to six students each and met for approximately 20 minutes during our class meeting time. In each group, one student led the discussion, a second student recorded comments about and page numbers of the books that were brought up in the discussion, and a third student reported back to the class the major themes that were discussed. We rotated these responsibilities until everyone had had an opportunity to take each role. I collected the notes made by the recorder and reviewed them so I could address common questions or highlight aspects of the discussions that were repeated in other groups. I also sat in on the groups and kept my own notes of topics for further exploration so I could provide additional resources as necessary or ask questions to further the group's inquiry.

I asked my students to select a focus for each study group session so we could prepare to have a discussion from our reading that served a specific purpose. At the same time, I encouraged students to pose their own additional questions as they read and to be prepared to share their comments in their small groups. When the students in my postgraduate classes were reading a common text, they would decide how much to read before the next meeting. To help my students decide which text to

select, I read aloud passages from each book and told the students something about the author's perspective or theme. Often, I would go through a pile of 10 or more books, and each student would find a book that he or she wanted to read. This process never failed to bring a heightened level of excitement and motivation to the course.

More recently, I was asked to form study groups with classroom teachers as part of their inservice program for the year. The teachers set the topics for discussion and the amount of reading from a text I had chosen, but we all contributed to the group by bringing in additional sources, which we shared and discussed. We met together for one hour per week for five weeks. The teachers were expected to try out what they learned in their classrooms, so I also had to spend time working with them individually to help them with this.

In my university classes, I also gave each student an assignment to conduct a classroom activity. Each student made a proposal for this project that involved assessment and teaching. In the teacher inservice program, the teachers tried new methods or changes in their curricula. Once the teachers had an opportunity to implement the changes in their classrooms, they shared the changes with the rest of the group. Some study groups created schoolwide action plans based on what they learned from their reading, and they introduced these plans to the rest of the teachers. Then the groups planned to achieve the changes within a given period of time.

I like to call my study groups "teacher dialogues" because everyone is invited to participate and their opinions are respected. The group is not looking for the one right answer but rather for the variety of perspectives that will help to define solutions to real problems. Even as individual group members are encouraged to take turns speaking, listening is recognised as the most important role for each participant. The group members develop greater tolerance for differing or opposing points of view as they work together to come up with solutions to problems.

Not only is the learning environment enhanced by teacher dialogues because of the discussion but it also is enhanced because of the camaraderie that the groups build within the class or school. As the participants proceed in regular discussions, they begin to know personal and professional details of one another's lives. In a sense, it is as if they have been given an opportunity to visit one another's classrooms as they listen to the stories about children, curriculum projects, and the teachers themselves. Great friendships grow out of the dialogue groups and serve to build a stronger educational community.

The best way to understand how teacher study groups work is to try one. (See Figure 1 for information about forming a teacher study group.) I encourage teachers and students at any level in education to come together, select a text or topic for discussion, and begin. The groups should set aside regular meeting times that are about two hours per day for two to four days per month, and each group needs to find a place where it can meet comfortably without distractions. Group members also need to agree that the purpose of their dialogues will be to find a solution to a particular problem or to discuss a particular issue.

Group members must be cautioned not to dominate or leave the discussion up to others. It

FIGURE 1 Forming a teacher study group

- It is important for each person to come to the group prepared to participate fully in the discussion.
- The study group should meet regularly for a specified amount of time in a place that is conducive to quality dialogue.
- Members of the study group should commit themselves to read and reflect on materials so they can share their ideas with the rest of the group.
- Discussions should be textbound so that participants delve into the meaning of materials that they read.
- Discussions should be personalized so each participant accepts responsibility for contributions to the group.
- Members of the study group should apply new ideas in their classrooms between meetings so the results can be shared with the group.

Prepared by Dr. Alis Headlam for Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, December 1999.

is important that each person feels equal positioning in the group, which is why it is helpful to rotate the group leaders that I refer to as facilitators. Listening is also essential for a successful group. Practising the art of waiting until another speaker has completed his or her thoughts means that participants need to recognise that their ideas do not have more importance than anyone else's do. It might be helpful for some group members to jot down ideas while they wait for a chance to speak. The facilitator's role is critical in establishing order, keeping everyone focused, and determining if the opportunity to participate is fairly maintained. It takes practice to be a good group leader, and teachers who do lead the group well also perform better in their own classrooms. (See Figure 2 for more information about the facilitator's role.)

The participants should agree early on to a timeline for designing their action plan. Once the action plan is about to be implemented, another timeline should be set for its completion. The group should continue to meet during this time period so their supportive network continues and assists with the plan's development. Groups may want to use or adapt the teaching dialogue recording sheet shown in Figure 3 to meet their individual needs.

Conclusion

Teacher study groups enhance learning because they not only build on what the participants

FIGURE 2 The role of the facilitator

1. The facilitator is responsible for starting the conversation by asking for contributions from group members.
2. The facilitator is not a teacher. He or she should allow the other group members to make the major contributions to the discussion.
3. The facilitator is a listener and should try to find the key concepts or themes in the discussion so they can be pointed out to the group as the discussion evolves.
4. The facilitator is a negotiator and should try to find the common ground that values differing perspectives should a disagreement emerge.
5. The facilitator helps the group by keeping the discussion focused on the text rather than on opinions or unrelated theories.
6. The facilitator promotes group consultation that leads to decisions based on group consensus. Everyone agrees to accept the decision of the group.
7. The facilitator is the timekeeper and makes sure that the discussion progresses within the time period designated by the group.
8. The facilitator may make a brief summary of the high points to assist the recorder/reporter and achieve group consensus on the key points that are discussed.

FIGURE 3 Teaching dialogue recording sheet

Initiating Dialogue (Burning questions)	Striving for Depth (Text references)	Making Connections (Interpretation)	Additional Questions	Making an Informed Action Plan

Adapted from Mills, H., Jennings, L.B.,Donnelly, A., & Mueller, L.Z. (2001, September). When teachers have time to talk: The value of curricular conversations. *Language Arts*, 79(1), 20–28. Used with permission.

already know but they also encourage the participants to stretch their imaginations and look at new possibilities. Participants benefit from the text or texts that they study and from the rich knowledge that each person brings to the group. The group's collective knowledge is far greater than each individual's experiences because the process that develops during fruitful discussions produces a creative expansion that incorporates everything that occurs in the group's interactions.

Teacher study groups also provide an active means of building a close network of professionals in schools. As the participants share their experiences, their hopes, and their fears, a bond is formed between them that helps them address concerns in other areas of their work. The supportive networking that occurs does not end with the completion of the dialogue but continues throughout the entire school experience. The networking builds opportunities for improved problem solving and can serve as a model for other teachers and administrators. As participants reach out in the school community with an action plan, they continue to have a supportive group that can help to refine and expand their projects. The collective voice of the group can reach a broader spectrum of the educational community than the voice of a teacher who tries to implement his or her own action plan in isolation.

Strategies for Sharing Books With African Children

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Sharing literature is important for many reasons. It provides a vehicle for expressing ideas, beliefs, and values and for describing struggles in the daily lives of people around the world. According to Guthrie (1981), literacy is a cultural thread running through and binding together the individuals it touches. Literature also plays an important role in helping people learn and appreciate their own cultural heritage (Norton, 1994).

In Steven L. Layne's poem "There's Something," the author reminds people of the need to share the love of books and literature with children (Layne, 2001).

There's Something
There's something in their eyes
There's something in their hearts
There's something in their souls
That longs to hear a story.

There's something in their eyes
That sparkles likes a gem,
Each time I tell them of a book I'd like to read to them.

There's something in their hearts
A yearning deep within;
They're hoping I will take them to a place they've never been.

There's something in their souls
Which craves the chance to meet;
The characters who seem to somehow make their lives complete.

There's something in their eyes
There's something in their hearts
There's something in their souls
That longs to hear a story. (pp. 62–63)

Literature is more than books. Two oral forms of literature that can engage children in understanding stories and appreciating literary language are reading aloud to children and storytelling (Stoodt-Hill & Amspaugh-Corson, 1996).

Reading Aloud to Children

According to Routman (1991) using read-alouds is the most influential factor in a young child's success in learning to read. Read-alouds can help students think and talk about text (Calkins, 2000), creating interest in books, fostering emotional development, expanding students' imagination, and developing their skills in using and understanding language (Danielson & Rogers, 2000; Reutzel, 2001). Read-alouds also increase achievement by building students' general knowledge (Bromley, 1996).

Research has been conducted on reading to children since the 19th century (Huey, 1908/1973), and research in emergent literacy has strongly supported the practice of story reading both at home and at school (Durkin, 1966). However, Wan (2000) notes that there is a need for additional research on reading aloud to children with diverse backgrounds and for further investigation of cross-cultural and cross-national differences in reading aloud to children.

Comprehension is recognised as an essential part of reading, and cultural factors have a facilitating effect on reading comprehension and recall. For example, Bell and Clark (1998) discuss how a group of African American children were exposed to one of three types of story conditions: black

imagery with African American cultural theme content, black imagery with Euro-American cultural theme content, and white imagery with traditional Euro-American cultural theme content. Bell and Clark found that when the African American students were exposed to stories possessing themes consistent with the African American sociocultural experience, the students demonstrated greater recall and comprehension of the stories.

Strategies for Sharing Literature

Interactive read-alouds. This strategy requires teachers to present reading as a performance. First, the teacher must preview the book and practice reading it. It is important to establish the mood for the story and maintain an appropriate pace when telling the story. The interactive aspects of the read-aloud take place as teachers engage students in discussion about the books. Teachers might use open-ended queries such as the ones in the following list to prompt students' comments and questions about selections used in a read-aloud:

- What do you think?
- Why? Why did...?
- What would happen if...?
- Tell me more about....
- Do you mean that...?
- I wonder how....

In addition to encouraging students to talk, teachers can ask students to participate in the read-aloud by reading select portions of text or reciting repetitive phrases. The teacher may continue reading after student comments, questions, and participation. At the end of the selection, class discussion can be used to consolidate students' thinking and prompt their involvement in extension activities such as role-playing, drawing and writing, and singing and making rhythms (Campbell, 2001).

Story webs. Webbing is a visual strategy for presenting and organising information and ideas (Bromley, 1996). Pictures or words representing the main idea form the centre of the web, and connecting lines are used to show relationships between ideas. Webs can be used as a strategy before, during, and after a read-aloud. Before reading, teachers can record what students already know about the story in an attempt to activate their prior knowledge about the story and to stimulate their interest. Words and concepts are added to the web during the reading to facilitate students' understanding of vocabulary and to depict relationships in the story. After the reading, the information recorded on the web can be discussed to facilitate comprehension (Bromley, 1996).

The ELVES strategy. Another way to engender interest in and foster listening comprehension during read-alouds is through the use of the ELVES strategy (Levesque, 1989), which comprises five steps. The first step is *excite*. During the step, the focus is on the listener's experiences, the literary elements in the story, and story predictions. Step two involves *listening* in order to verify predictions and comprehend other story elements. Step three is *visualising*, during which readers are encouraged to create and share their mental images of actions in the literature. During step four—to *extend*—students are assisted in gaining new understanding of the literature by relating previous and new knowledge. Finally, step five is to *savour*. In step five, students reflect on the story, verbalise their responses, and become involved with follow-up activities. The follow-up activities might engage students in drama, music, and other means of kinaesthetic expression.

Stopping to think. This strategy is used to help students monitor their comprehension and make story connections (Taberski, 2000). Essentially, the strategy involves teachers stopping at predetermined spots in the story that is being read to ask children to do the following:

1. predict what they think is going to happen
2. explain why they think the event is going to happen
3. verify their predictions by recalling what happened in the story

Two-word strategy. Following the reading of an imaginative text or story, additional assistance to foster comprehension can be provided. One technique is Hoyt's (1998) two-word strategy, which involves the teacher asking students to think about the events, facts, and connections within the story.

While children engaged in independent reading frequently use the strategy, it also can be adapted to read-alouds. The strategy begins with children reading or listening to a text selection. Students are then asked to think of two words that reflect their understanding. Once students think of their two words, they are asked to share them with the group and explain why they selected the words. The strategy not only requires students to recall text and demonstrate inferential reasoning but also requires them to express their understanding of the selection's theme. The activity also encourages students to understand the mood of the selection and invites them to make personal connections to what they hear.

Storytelling

Oral literature has a rich history in Africa. The first known collection of African tales was published in 1828 for European audiences (Norton, 1998). The art of storytelling, the role of the storyteller, and audience participation are key elements of African folklore that influenced the literary characteristics of the tales (Norton, 2001).

Storytelling can touch the lives of African children culturally, socially, and individually because it is a familiar, informal method of instruction (Osa, 1995). African folk tales, myths, and legends are some of the key forms of literature that can be shared to motivate young African children to read. The formulaic openings used in Cameroon (Noss, 1972) and formulaic openings and closings used in Ghana (Larungu, 1992) are cultural components that add to an oral literature experience. These elements engage the listeners by encouraging attentiveness and establishing a listening purpose. The following story opening from Cameroon serves as an example:

Storyteller:	Listen to a tale! Listen to a tale!
Audience:	A tale for fun, for fun. Your throat is a gong, your body a locust, bring it here for me to roast!
Storyteller:	Children, listen to a tale, a tale for fun, for fun.

Visual aids or poems also can be used to introduce the story and help children to understand the stories shared. Whatever techniques are used, the primary goal is to entice the listener and provide a context for the story.

Storytelling Methods

Several storytelling methods—traditional, adapted pantomime, character imagery, and chant (Trostle & Donato, 2001)—might be used in sharing literature with African children.

Traditional storytelling uses stories with an entertaining plot. The stories are told using expressive voice tones and gestures and include a limited number of characters, an interesting plot, and a quick conclusion.

Adapted pantomime is a form of storytelling in which the storyteller dresses in loose-fitting, dark clothing and demonstrates the story through partial or complete gestures and movements. No props are used. Instead, the storyteller uses clear expressive facial movements.

To help students to identify characters in stories, the character imagery method may be used. This method relies on gestures and body movements. The story is told from the perspective of the main character and uses the first person to convey the characters' actions and feelings. To help make this form of storytelling lively, teachers are encouraged to dress like the main character and to act out the story according to his or her perspective.

Yet another form of storytelling that could be used to share the rhythm of Africa is the chant method. This method requires the use of a story with a repetitive element. After approximately every 15 seconds in the story, the storyteller uses an agreed-upon gesture to signal the audience to produce the repetitive phrase or sentence. Music can be added to the beginning of the story as a way of introducing the story and actively engaging students (Trostle & Donato, 2001).

Story retelling is a form of storytelling in which students summarise, organise, and remember elements in printed material. Story retelling requires the listener to relate the information presented in the story to his or her personal background and interpretation of the story (Morrow, 1996).

All the strategies for sharing stories have the potential to help students understand literature, story

action and characters, and language. Both storytelling and read-alouds with children are excellent means for teachers to share the wonder of stories and the magic of words.

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Challenges to Reading Teachers in Multilingual Settings in South Africa

Lydia Abel

South Africa

Curriculum Change in South Africa Since 1994

The development of a national curriculum is a major challenge for any nation, and when a whole country depends on it to transform society in one broad stroke, it imposes tremendous expectations on such a curriculum. South Africa's democratic government has inherited a divided and unequal system of education and must recognise that apartheid is not the only force that has contributed to the challenges South Africans face in the development of an effective education system. The influences and waves of educational reform worldwide have rolled through South Africa uncritically and have been passively absorbed, sometimes without regard for South Africa's multiple realities, contexts, and paradoxes.

Curriculum 2005 was the first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa. Deliberately intended to simultaneously overturn the legacy of apartheid education and catapult South Africa into the 21st century, it was an innovation both bold and revolutionary in its magnitude and conception. Curriculum 2005 was streamlined between January and July 2001 in order to ensure that its goals and vision are more easily realised in the classroom. Although I was privileged to be a part of the National Task Team and gained many insights during the curriculum review process, the views expressed in this paper are my own.

Language Policy and Language Learning

Multilingualism is enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Part of affirming the culture and identity of young South African learners is affirming their home language as a language of learning, particularly because language is closely associated with both personal and cognitive development. The Revised National Curriculum Statement supports the (Additive Multilingualism) Language in Education Policy (Republic of South Africa, 1997), in which learners are encouraged to learn and develop cognitively in their home language, while gaining competence in an additional language. Language is not an end in itself but a means to interact with the world and form meaningful relationships. Language is a complex skill that, in a child, develops spontaneously, largely without conscious effort or formal instruction, and most children use language without understanding the underlying structure. Therefore, language is not a cultural invention but a biological adaptation to build communication.

Conversely, literacy (on which the curriculum focuses) is a cultural invention that must be taught and learned. We should not forget that babies listen for a long time before starting to speak. Once they begin, young children almost never stop speaking and asking questions. By the time they reach school, children have quite a large repertoire of words, concepts, and understandings. Usually, the first thing they learn is not to ask so many questions—the very thing that should be encouraged and supported vigorously. South African educators must recognise these skills that learners bring with them into the classroom as the prior knowledge and experience that should be mobilised and built on.

In reality, however, many young South African students enter school and are taught in a language

that is not their home language. Sometimes the language of learning is a third or fourth language because the school community decides on the language of learning and teaching, which is increasingly becoming English. Learning may take longer for some students when their home language is not the medium of instruction. These students should not be treated as slow learners but should be afforded more breadth, practice, experience, and consolidation to acquire the concepts, skills, attitudes, and values required for further education in the language of learning and teaching. In some cases, the local language might be a street dialect, and students who use this dialect should be afforded the same opportunities. This strategy puts additional responsibility on teachers to provide a language-rich learning environment that affirms the home language when teaching and assessing learners.

This form of bilingualism (or in some cases, multilingualism) can only develop in a social context in which all the languages are valued and reinforced (Luckett, 1995). The Department of Education clearly states that students might be expected to have different starting points when they arrive at school. However, by the end of grade 9, students should be able to use at least two official languages to demonstrate the competencies described in the critical outcomes.

It is the confluence of language learning and policy that frames this paper because it describes the expectation for delivery placed upon reading teachers in the classroom. The "reading problem" is continuously evolving and is deeply embedded in traditional (sometimes conflicting) understandings of the nature of teaching reading in the foundation phase—the first three years of schooling.

It is important that a paper dealing with the challenges facing reading teachers is contextualised within perceptions surrounding multilingualism, especially at the beginning of schooling. One perception is that funders—both local and foreign corporations and governments—see English as the language for South African students to learn. The funders measure the country's status by the capacity to communicate in English, which tends to drive the provision of materials and programmes for reading development. More recently, a number of multilingual projects have been initiated in various parts of South Africa, integrating innovative and exciting multilingual materials (e.g., Potyi books, Praesa, READ Educational Trust, and Educational Support Services Trust publications) with teacher development and different kinds of language support for teachers.

The pedagogical reason (Bloch, 2000, 2001) for adopting an additive bilingual approach is that a large body of research shows that this approach will lead to more effective learning—both in the mother tongue and in other languages. In South Africa, the other language is usually English, and Bloch (2000) contends that the economic, social, and educational climate of South Africa is one that clearly favours English at the expense of indigenous languages. Bitter memories of Bantu education's abuse of African languages as tools for underdevelopment hinder positive attitudes towards sustaining and extending the use of the mother tongue in addition to English in South African education. This perceived negative feeling towards home language education is supported by the findings of Vinjevold and Taylor (1999).

Parents have a crucial role in the delivery and implementation of language policy. Parents across South Africa—from Kokstad to Kraaifontein—who speak African languages and have minimal exposure to English, have increasingly called for English-language education for their children in early primary school because of the mistaken belief that the sooner a child begins learning a language, the better he or she will learn it (Abel, 2001; Bloch, 2000, 2001; Townsend & Versfeld, 2001). These choices are often complicated by the perception that the English-speaking, former model C schools (formerly whites-only schools that were and still are well resourced with an engaged, informed, and mostly affluent parent body) are the role models to be emulated, which occurs not always with positive outcomes and often at great expense. Ironically, these schools represent some of the most racially integrated multilingual schools in South Africa today.

Misinformation and fear often motivate the school governing bodies' drive for English-language instruction. The South African government is in the process of taking the necessary steps to provide information to the public so responsible, informed decisions about education can

be made. In particular, the media seem bent on playing a debilitating role by castigating the new curriculum for not delivering students who can read, as if this task were the easiest and simplest thing to accomplish. The media do not seem to realise that just about every English-speaking country is grappling with learners who are unable to read. Without understanding the reality of the timeframes in which positive change (e.g., increased success in reading tests) can be achieved, it is hard for the educated general public to understand the problem. After all, we all went through school and learned to read. However, that accomplishment was in different time and reality, as I will explain in what follows. Currently, grade 4 classes across South Africa are being given benchmarks for literacy and numeracy. The results of this process will form a true baseline for future analysis as, for the first time, the majority of young children who should be in school are in school.

Challenges to Reading Teachers

Vinjevold and Taylor (1999) point out some of the challenges that schools face, including

- low levels of English competence or lack of competence in students' home language;
- antipathy towards mother tongue instruction as it has been delivered in the past;
- a low-level relationship between teachers' cognitive levels and optimal use of available materials; and conceptual and knowledge constraints coupled with insufficient and inappropriate materials. (p. 234)

Vinjevold and Taylor suggest that it is important to investigate the factors that will optimise teaching and learning under these conditions, such as ways of mediating knowledge between teachers and learners with language assistants, bridging classes in the language of learning and teaching, and developing and using appropriate storybooks and other learning materials. These factors must be integrated, and these threads emerge in the projects on which I report in what follows. There have been a number of such projects running over the last 2 years—including Get Inset, a nongovernmental educational organisation (NGEO) partnership with the Western Education Department—but the one unifying factor for success is the enormous dedicated and committed input of time and intellect by educators and researchers or NGEOs. Short-term interventions cannot achieve long-term sustainability.

The following list of challenges is neither definitive nor finite, but it details the areas about which I have experience and a deep understanding:

- complex language scenarios in schools;
- the dominant perception that literacy learning means learning sets of skills to be used later, coupled with confusion about "school readiness";
- the nature and form of integration required for language learning and literacy in the foundation phase;
- recognising the skills that learners bring with them into the classroom as prior knowledge and experience that should be mobilised and built on;
- leaving the comfort zone that teachers know and have experienced themselves at school and moving into the reality of 21st-century learners

The current South African educational policy clearly states that learners learn more easily if they are taught in their home language, but it also recognises that the languages of learning and teaching at school are different from the learners' home language in some instances. Although this situation is not the case in the majority of South African schools, which tend to reflect the local language usage, a significant and increasing number of such schools exist, especially given the changing demographics of the country (Abel, 2001; Townsend & Versfeld, 2001).

Each scenario that follows presents a particular challenge to reading teachers in a given school and reflects the school's language policy. Although the South African government endeavours to inform the public and parents about the implications of their language choices, teachers have a responsibility to inform themselves and, by extension, their communities about the implications and then guide the choices being made.

In most South African schools, the students' home language is the medium of instruction throughout the foundation phase, and this phase is

the only time the additional language is heard at school. In the rural areas, students are mostly monolingual, and Afrikaans is the most frequently heard and spoken additional language. In most of rural South Africa and in many urban township schools, English is essentially a foreign language.

Overall, the call for English as the language of learning and teaching is growing. The difficulties faced by learners of African languages as a second language are quite different, but they are frequently taught by people for whom the African language also is a second language, which is similar to having most children who speak an African language learn English from second-language speakers of English. The difference is that they are not compelled to write examinations in the other language.

Where the home language of most learners is the medium of instruction, the learners whose home language differs from the medium of instruction are immersed in their additional language in the classroom and the community. This experience occurs in bilingual classrooms in which two languages are developed simultaneously and spontaneously, a scenario that seems most successful when an African language and Afrikaans are spoken in the community (Abel, 2001; Townsend & Versfeld, 2001). In bilingual classrooms, learners seem to acquire both languages more easily, and they frequently speak a mixture of the two languages on the playground.

In a given classroom, the teacher and learners may have different home languages, which means that the target language is an additional language for them all. Examples of this situation can be seen in most provinces in which a number of different African languages are spoken. For example, in Northern Province a teacher in an English-language school might be a Tshivenda speaker, but the learners may be mainly Sepedi speakers (Ritchie, 2001). In many of these cases, the classes are large, and transmission teaching (teacher-directed education with little learner interaction) is still the norm.

Basic skills in the learners' home language are addressed before an additional language is introduced to them. In this system, learners use their home language for the first term or two at the most. Sometimes, a Language Aid—a first-language speaker of the additional language, often a parent or unemployed teacher—helps in the initial stages. When the learners' home language is used for a certain period and then a switch to an additional language is made, the educational system assumes that the skills the learners acquired in the home language will automatically be transferred to the new language. However, the skill transfer is far from automatic, and this way of thinking is a remnant from the old system that still persists in some places. The change from one language to another can be abrupt and confusing for the learners unless it is handled very delicately with much mediation of ideas and concepts in both languages.

At this point, code switching is such a common occurrence that most teachers are not even aware that they are switching code (i.e., the teacher uses one language as a medium of instruction but she and the learners revert to the home language to clarify concepts and confirm comprehension). Although code switching can be helpful, if it continues to matriculation level the learners may never fully grasp important concepts in the language in which the examinations are written. This situation is largely responsible for high failure rates at the matriculation level. Too often, especially in rural areas of South Africa, only the learners' home language is used in school, and learners become more proficient in reading and writing in the language most familiar to them only to find that material in their language is unavailable beyond a certain education level. For this reason, teachers should provide question papers in all the languages of their province so learners can get a good translation of examination questions.

Given the way many South African teachers have been trained and conditioned to think about teaching reading and language, many learners never acquire the cognitive skills and abilities that they are thought to have acquired in their home language, regardless of which language is used (Abel, 1997; Abel & Rhodes, 2001). More recently, (Cognition in Education Reference Group, 2000), grade 1 teachers have found it difficult to explain the "cognitive verbs" derived from the critical outcomes—verbs such as *identify*, *explain*, *describe*, *compare*, *categorise*, *judge*, *predict*, and *create*—how these verbs could be taught and modeled,

and how students' learning of the words could be assessed. Arguably, most teachers have had little or no opportunity to come to grips with the theoretical underpinnings of Curriculum 2005. Therefore, it is understandable that there has been a failure to link language and cognitive development on a practical level even though all teachers know on an intellectual level that this link should be made. Many South African teachers have never experienced a cognitive approach to teaching, which is the most fundamental assumption hidden in Curriculum 2005.

Some teachers (Bloch, 2000) express a partial understanding of the dominant perception that literacy learning is a matter of learning sets of skills by saying that they first need to teach "the basics" before they can start with outcomes-based education. Essentially, if teachers do not understand both that children learn the technical aspects of written language as they engage in meaningful social activities and the manner in which the learning happens, how can teachers make use of the learning opportunities provided by such activities?

In order to learn a language, learners need a lot of exposure—oral, aural, and written—at the right levels, in the right context, and in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them. Although comprehensible input is at the heart of language learning, it is insufficient on its own. Whole language and communicative approaches encourage learners to use language, negotiate meaning, and refine their own understanding through feedback. Such approaches have generally been expanded to include some explicit attention to vocabulary and grammar. Snow (in Graves, 2001) points out that children need the following insights if they are to become successful readers:

- to understand the alphabetic principle, which is about functionality of language;
- phonemic awareness—the awareness that spoken words are made up of a sequence of separate phonemes (p. 96)

As incredibly simple as the insights may sound, they are the hardest thing for teachers to grasp at a functional level. The concept is complicated because not all languages in South African multilingual settings have the same phonetic and phonemic makeup. For example, English uses rhyming quite successfully, but rhyming in Xhosa, for example, is something quite different and often is based on rhythms. Teachers used to teaching Xhosa phonetically often try to use the same methodology for English and fail. There is seldom an exact translation of terms, concepts, and explanations from one language to another. For example, in Xhosa there are three different words for *compare*, depending on what it is that one is comparing.

Using the contrastive language approach detailed by Cummins (2001) involves learning to compare how the different languages work. In my opinion, this approach seems to have promise for South Africa, especially if one looks at the different language combinations across all the provinces. For example, consider verbs. In English, the verb is generally found in the middle of the sentence, whereas in Afrikaans it is usually at the end. In Xhosa, however, the verb is attached to the noun with implications for gender and number. In classrooms in which the teacher speaks all three languages fluently, this kind of explanation flows almost casually through the lessons. However, when a teacher is teaching in a language in which he or she is not fully competent, problems arise.

In terms of using and integrating different approaches, I have found that some teachers who have only limited opportunities to attend courses seem to use one methodology until the next course is offered. They continue to use different approaches side by side without any thought of integration or purpose, which can cause real difficulty for learners who encounter one approach in the first grade and another in the second. The learners remain confused, and their reading skills do not progress.

Although some grammatical structures are learned earlier than others, grammar is not learned in a formulaic or linear way. Grammar should be learned from a position of need, not as a list of rules to be applied in particular situations. Grammatical building blocks definitely exist, and when learners are not able to read as expected, teachers must then unpack and carefully probe learners' structures to discover at which point the learning blockage occurs. The learning process is gradual and develops as a spiral moving upwards

and outwards. As new doors open, concepts and words become imbued with deeper meaning and a wider range of connections for the learners.

One of the basic tenets of Curriculum 2005 is that one size definitely does not fit all. Learners can be expected to learn different things in different ways and at different speeds. Nowhere does this idea apply more than in reading, and finding ways to deal with it in South Africa's multilingual environment is not easy. A commitment from school management to set up the timetable in ways that reading at different levels and languages may be facilitated is required for success. Graded levels of books for reading are vital for this operation, and teachers should fully understand the levels and how best to use them. Another learning barrier is that teachers generally offer learners practice in reading and then make assessments, but they offer very little by way of reading instruction, especially after grade 3. Preparation for reading instruction should include the preskills each child needs and the investigation of possibilities for sensitive groupings. Learners should be arranged so differing aspects of the learning process can be addressed at different times. In short, this strategy requires a creative, well-informed, metacognitive teacher who is continually assessing his or her own efficacy in the classroom in relation to learners' progress or lack of it.

On the basis of this information, I offer a synthesis that captures the essence of a range of cognitive learning theories, including Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, and others. The theories of these writers are blended with the theories of the African worldview and human capital development (Abel & Railoun, 2001) and the literature on indigenous knowledge systems (Odora-Hoppers, in press). In turn, the theories are linked to the experiential, mediational model for training transformation (Abel, 1997), which has been used with great success in schools across South Africa as the basis for holistic training programmes.

Trainers have to view training in the teaching of reading as a holistic enterprise encompassing a range of different attributes. Table 1 offers a comparison of the traditional approach with an approach that is mediational and experiential and starts where the learner is.

TABLE 1 Comparison of teaching approaches

	Traditional Teaching Focuses On:	Mediational/Experiential Learning Development Focuses On:
Purpose	Skill acquisition	Attitudinal/cognitive/behavioural/spiritual/innovative change
Assumptions	Change—rational through standardisation	Change rational but also emotional and/or sociocultural through awareness raising and experience
Content	Public, given content knowledge, and implicit and discrete theory	Besides traditional, also personal, problematic, process-oriented content knowledge, explicit and integrated theory
Process	Didactic and abstract, non–life-related, individual Instructor as expert; passive and subordinate novice One-directional; unsupported	Dialectical, mediational, and experiential Valued as life-related Collaborative, holistic, and personal Instructor as facilitator/mediator Novice as active agent Multidirectional Appropriate support and mentoring Learner-centred
Evaluation and Measurement	One-off, pass/fail	Continuous assessment, monitoring, and feedback loops

From Abel, L. (1997). *Teacher development mediation: A cognition-based reconsideration*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa.

Nature and Form of Reading Integration Required by the New Curriculum

The languages learning area outcomes in Curriculum 2005 are written in such a way that reading, writing, speaking, and listening can be identified and analysed as separate entities for the sake of continuity and progression. It is important to note that although reading and writing, listening and speaking, and knowledge of grammar are presented as separate outcomes, they should be integrated when taught and assessed. For instance, learners might read and analyse a particular kind of text, orally practice the present simple tense used in this kind of text, listen to a description of a process and take notes, and then write a description of another process. Suitable texts in this situation are as wide and varied as possible and include oral, visual, written, or multimedia texts.

The outcomes for the languages learning area are as follows:

- Listening: The learner is able to listen for information and enjoyment and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
- Speaking: The learner is able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.
- Reading and Viewing: The learner is able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural, and emotional values in texts.
- Writing: The learner is able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
- Thinking and Reasoning: The learner is able to use language to think and reason and to access, process, and use information for learning.
- The learner knows and is able to use the sounds, vocabulary, and grammar of the additional language.

Language is a complex skill that develops in a child spontaneously. We should not forget that babies listen for a long time before starting to speak. By the time children reach school, they already have a relatively large vocabulary. How does one access the prior knowledge and experience of first-time schoolgoers? Gaining this access should be the focus in grade R and 1 classes from the very first day, and it is one of the most difficult challenges facing reading teachers.

Once teachers came to grips with the idea that they should not just start teaching reading in the way South African schools have done in the past, it was an easy jump to really innovative thinking. Teachers in one township school (Cognition in Education Reference Group, 2000) decided to ask their grade 1 learners near the start of the school year if they understood the word *problem*. The learners were asked to make a drawing to show the word's meaning. The drawings were amazing in their detail, and the teacher was astonished by the language capability of learners she thought could not yet read or write. Pictures of police and guns abounded with all the appropriate words such as *police* and *bang-bang* written in English. One learner drew a baby in a burning shack with the word *fire* written in Xhosa. Each child had an opportunity to explain his or her picture while the teacher wrote the common words on sheets of paper in the different languages the learners had been using. The same learners also were able to illustrate their own number concept by drawing one hamburger, two guns, three people, and so on with the number written beside the picture.

In another project (Abel, 2001), teachers were asked to map the learners in their class to identify each individual's reading ability. Then, the teachers were asked to identify the nature of each child's problem—no easy task with more than 45 learners per class. Teachers began to discuss the learners and how they would address their problems. As a result, it became clear that it was important not to teach the whole class all the perceptual skills at the same time and in the same way but to develop a programme tailored to individual learners' needs and to assess and monitor their progress all the time, adjusting the teaching process accordingly.

Additionally, the current interpretation of literacy includes a range of new literacies such as media literacy, computer literacy, cultural and artistic literacy, critical literacy, and visual literacy. These

literacies require a whole new range of skills, attitudes, and values that learners (and their teachers) need in order to live in the 21st century. Therefore, reading teachers are challenged to leave the comfort zone of what they know and have experienced themselves at school and move into the reality of 21st-century learners. A teacher once told me that learners in schools are nothing like the learners the teacher was taught about in college (Abel, 1997). It is time to close this gap.

There is an implicit challenge to provide mechanisms through which information and innovation may be shared horizontally and vertically through the educational system to ensure acceptability of practice and process. Curriculum designers need to recognise that innovative design processes, such as reading programmes, are interactive in order to align their true meaning and purpose with practise. The programmes require ongoing support from a variety of structures at appropriate levels of input. We should promote a culture of recording and evaluating innovations and diverse experiences to be shared with a wider audience through teacher-driven conferences and presentations or through websites on which teachers' successes can be seen. This process will ensure that evaluations and other data from schools are not just pushed up the system never to be seen again but are used to inform the transformation process.

Above all, schools should ensure that time for interaction, debate, and the innovation of design is adequately allocated within the educational system and that the innovators are recognised for their efforts and diligence. Learning will only happen effectively and efficiently when the teachers and schools have mastered the innovation. Teachers already are exhausted by innovation overload, the daily demands of teaching, their isolation from national debates, the limited opportunity for sustained reflection, and the still more limited ability for curriculum and classroom transformation.

Without adequate understanding of the reasons why concepts are either included in or omitted from learning programmes, there can be only a kind of lip service to change. Yes, teachers collaborate in their planning, but can they show evidence? Yes, teachers ask questions and allow learners to ask questions, but what kinds of questions and why? No real answers are forthcoming. Yes, teachers integrate arts and culture into their work when the children do a poster on road safety, but is the work meaningful? The challenge is to find a balance between educational integrity, school choices, and teaching and learning imperatives.

A Vision for the Future

The Internet cannot teach in the same way as engagement with literature and the physical encounter with books can. If the activation rather than the stuffing of the mind is the main business of education, then I argue that an invigorated book culture must remain central. However, the reality for most inhabitants of the African continent, including South Africa, is that the starting point is not with books and reading but with dynamic and immediately stimulating visual, aural, and oral images such as those seen on television and heard on the radio. In the last two centuries, if a person were unable to read, he or she may not have known what was going on in the world, but this case is far from true today. Television is pervasive. Upwards of 90% of South Africans have access to television in one way or another. There is quite simply no need to read, so why should people bother? Business offers no guaranteed job prospects with increased literacy, so people vote with their feet. The role of the printed word is being reconceptualised today, as evidenced by a very limited book buying public and the declining readership of newspapers in South Africa.

What I came to understand in a flash of insight is that learning on the Web will fuel reading. It will encourage the desire to explore and find out more. The route might be erratic, idiosyncratic, and ungovernable to a certain degree (although that is truly learner-based and learner-paced), but that is where the educator as mediator comes in, starting where the learners are and using their major interests to drive the learning process. We have to work backwards through pictures, images, and soap operas, if necessary, to grab learners' attention and make them aware reading's value in their lives.

I would like to explore these thoughts in the context of South Africa's current, urgent need for the training of vast numbers of reading and writ-

ing teachers for first-time schoolgoers across the country. These teachers must instruct learners in ways that deliver active and discerning readers and writers, not passive consumers of pulp fiction. In particular, I would like to examine existing policy, expectations, and beliefs about the nature of the trainers and training and support mechanisms.

There are four points I want to make about the reality in South Africa. First, no one reads—neither teachers, trainers, learners, nor parents. Even people who can read, resist reading. Other than a few people who find their way to books and other texts anyway, for the most part, South African learners see reading as a burdensome and somewhat boring chore related only to school. The reality, for those who can see it, predicates that any purely reading-based system is doomed (Thumbadoo, 2000).

Second, support mechanisms are few and overstretched. Third, the notion of training as a support mechanism implies a deficit model and is counterproductive when talking of a developmental model. Training can never be the whole answer. The very nature of the need means that there must be an ongoing interaction between a developmental support team and schools (Abel, 1997).

Fourth, in the last several years, projects, materials, and literacy seem to have come together. South Africans now recognize the need for provision of materials that in and of themselves support reading and learning development for teachers and learners in the classroom. Most materials and programmes have far-reaching impacts on teachers' understanding that children have great initiative and are highly capable and that previous methods have restricted rather than nurtured these qualities.

So what do these realities mean in practice? South Africa needs resident teams in local areas—much like the education zones that Maputo tried to introduce in the mid-1990s—in which competent and experienced support people are available at all times. This practice implies an ongoing relationship between the team members, who fully understand the realities in multilingual settings, and the schools they support.

So what we are talking about now is redefining the profession—setting new standards not only for delivery but also for the behaviours, attitudes, skills, and values of each and every educator that comes into contact with learners of any description. The terms educator and learner were purposefully chosen so that we include all learners and educators, and by extension, one of the new roles of "teachers" is to be a developmental teaching learner!

In South Africa, the difficulty of redress, equity, and access to equal quality information remains the plight of rural schools and teachers. It is almost impossible through the current way of doing things to guarantee them access and equality. In the light of the previous argument about access to television and the dearth of reading and reading materials, I go so far as to suggest that perhaps the *only* mechanism that is available to us at this time is the large-scale use of technology. The use of technology must be accompanied by immediate and deliberate upscaling of rural access to technology in the form of computers, telephones, and electricity where it is still not available.

The Web provides an opportunity for downloading materials, and because there is a cost involved, it is likely that people will download only what they really like to use—that is, they will have to read the material first. Perhaps this will prove to be the way to get South Africa reading.

The Web further provides for spaces for discussion, debate, and a range of other interactions in the educator's own timeframes—the middle of the night or the crack of dawn. However, what actually happens in the classroom as a result of these interactions is very difficult to monitor and assess.

Conclusion

The ideas in this paper present a radical move away from everything that is currently held as incontrovertible in education delivery, with special emphasis on reading. We have to recognise that education in South Africa has received huge financial input, both from government and civil society, but more is required as the results are few, slow to come, and hard to read. It is frustrating for teachers to be seen as not delivering successful readers, and it is worse for parents. If we mean to be a truly multilingual country, South African teachers need to be supported with sufficient and appropriate materials while they become multi-

lingual. South Africa actually has some of the most advanced educational policy in the world. Let us take the major steps needed to convert policy to practice and make the dream come true.

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Developing an Appropriate Reading Assessment Programme for Developing Countries

O.A. Afemikhe

Botswana

The importance of reading as a life skill demands that it should be given the needed emphasis right from the primary level of education, where it is first encountered. However, my cursory observation indicates that in developing countries such as Nigeria and Botswana, no formalised reading programme exists. Biakolo (2000) supports my observation, noting

> that reading instruction is managed by English language teachers in junior secondary schools who are overworked by their workload as well as inadequate training in reading. Therefore, what constitutes reading involves short passages, which are read from the recommended basal readers. (p. 21)

The basal reader approach to reading instruction uses questions to test comprehension, and then, the teacher confirms the correctness of students' answers. However, this approach to reading is restrictive. In light of the recent understanding of the reading process, now the reader is expected to use information critically and creatively. The ability to reason should be emphasised in any reading programme, and students should not stop asking questions while reading. Apart from reflecting on what is read, students should conceptualise situations that are depicted in their reading and how changes in the situations would influence the meaning.

What is happening in Botswana and Nigeria indicates that the wind of change in reading instruction and assessment is mainly cosmetic. In this paper, I discuss how I have developed a reading assessment programme that reflects current thinking about the reading process and is suitable for developing countries.

The instruments and methodologies for reading assessment have to be developmentally appropriate for, and culturally sensitive to, the populations with which they are to be used. Developing countries are composed of a mix of cultural situations influenced by a diverse colonial past. Therefore, the methodologies and instruments used in developed countries, apart from not being readily available, may not be quite appropriate. What assessment practices, when implemented, would enrich teaching and learning in developing countries?

A Reading Assessment Framework

One principle of the reading assessment framework is that assessment should be developmental and sustained, not a one-shot activity conducted to yield information to report to parents. Assessments should indicate developmental patterns leading to the achievement of long-term learning goals. Assessment also should emphasise day-to-day, more immediate indicators of instructional efficacy. Thus, short-term quality control should lead to overall programme quality improvement. What this framework implies is that there is need to move away from short-term, single instance assessments and towards long-term multiple situations assessments. Such an approach to assessment should incorporate self-scrutiny,

goal setting, self-determination, progress determination, and a pattern of development.

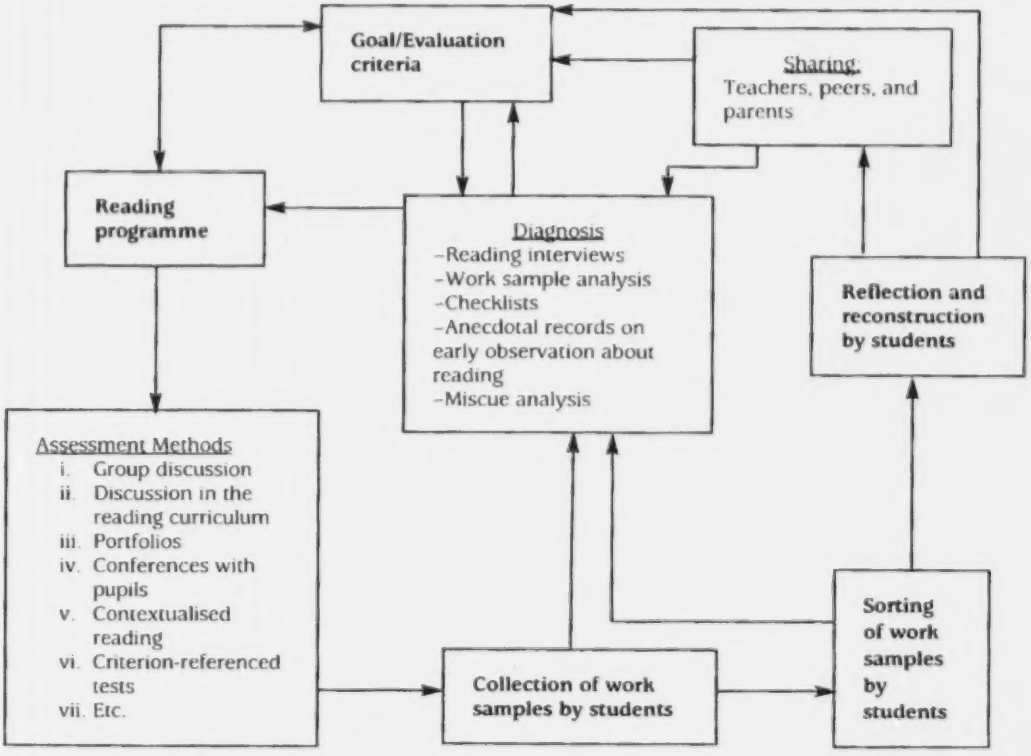
Additionally, this type of assessment should be ongoing and suggestive rather than fixed and definitive, and all stakeholders in the reading endeavour (e.g., parents, teachers, pupils, and administrators) should hold this view. Taking a cue from Ediger (1999), I believe that ongoing lessons and units in the teaching of reading should include the best objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures. This approach has promise for teachers striving to assure equity in the classes (Gooden, 1997) as we emphasise not only speed, factual recall, and vocabulary in reading but also qualities such as self-questioning, engagement, and interpretation.

The approach detailed here is an encompassing one that draws assessment information from many sources. For example, current emphases in assessment generally and in reading assessment specifically give authentic assessment procedures an important role. I am mindful of this and note that other researchers have indicated that portfolios can be used to evaluate reading interests, attitudes, motivation, and achievement (Overturf, 1997). It should be noted that because of the colonial past of most developing countries, instruction is normally conducted in a second language. What educators can best do in assessing reading in such situations is to adapt what may have been profitably used for first-language instruction.

Taking the previously discussed information into consideration, I outline the following reading assessment programme, which we believe, is suitable for developing countries (see Figure 1). It is my belief that this assessment programme can be applied at primary and secondary levels, although it may be easier to apply in secondary schools because of certain problems, particularly with children's level of language.

Any programme has goals and objectives, which are used as yardsticks for assessing its effectiveness. Therefore, the overall goals are expected to serve as a guide for generating

FIGURE 1 Reading assessment programme



situation-specific goals that are dependent on the level of and applicability to an individual child. The goals should be dynamic to reflect the child's changing needs, which is why the framework shown in Figure 1 connects goal/evaluation criteria and the reading programme with a line having arrows at both ends. The same connection is made for goal/evaluation criteria and diagnosis. What the figure indicates is that goals/evaluation criteria should change based on the results of our diagnosis, and goals set by the students and the teacher should be emphasised.

Diagnosis plays an important role in the assessment framework, and it is expected to reveal the strengths and needs of the students, which can then be discussed with the students, parents, and professionals within and outside the school. My belief is that diagnosis can be executed through reading interviews, work sample analyses, checklists, miscue analyses, and anecdotal records on observations about reading. The collation of information from the diagnosis should point to areas in which the students need more assistance. The goals and objectives that need to be emphasised are accordingly reviewed because we believe that assessment should gather evidence of student learning that can be used to plan and guide instruction.

The reading programme in this framework is the vehicle for attaining the goals agreed upon by the teacher and the students. The main purpose is to provide good reading instruction. Because of the multiplicity of goals that could be of interest and because the children in a particular class may have different needs, the assessment methods recommended for this framework should be varied and may include group discussions, portfolios, conferences with pupils, and/or criterion-referenced tests. The expectation is that the information collected in this manner should provide a more encompassing portrait of the children and should serve as a basis for further refinement of students' needs.

The students play an important role in this framework, and that is why they have to collect their work samples themselves. Teachers' interest should be not only in the grades that students may eventually obtain. The assessment should encourage students to pursue learning, and the expectation is that they be provided with an opportunity to make conceptual connections and reflect on their understanding. Against this background, students are given the freedom to select their work samples. This collection is important because students have the opportunity to reflect on why they have chosen what is in their samples. The collection needs to be reviewed by the teacher, and information emerging from such an activity can be fed back to the diagnosis level. With time, the work samples become voluminous and need to be reduced. The teacher's role in this regard is to encourage the students to choose items to be removed.

When presenting the assessment methods, I indicated that their main purpose is to enhance learning. Although grades are not of primary importance, parents need to judge the quality of schools through such grades. At the reflection stage, students and teachers look back at what has been achieved based on pieces of work that have been sorted out. According to Courtney and Abodeeb (1999), at this stage both teachers and students ask questions about what, why, and how learning has taken place. The information from this stage also can guide goal formulation.

The sorted work samples have to be shared by the child with parents, peers, and teachers. This opportunity can inform the discussion parents may want to have with the school authorities. In this way, a child's growth over time can be noted.

The application of this model requires certain questions to be answered. What follows is an illustration to guide would-be users of the model:

1. What are the goals of reading for my group of students/pupils? Let us assume that the goals are the enjoyment of reading and to gain fluency in reading.
2. What problems and strengths do my students currently have? How can such diagnostic information be obtained? The teacher can conduct reading interviews, miscue analyses, and observations.

From these activities, a teacher can identify the students' problems and strengths. For example, through these activities, a teacher could have discovered that the students only read when requested to do so and that the students were unable to recog-

nise certain words. In this example, the goals are still relevant for the teacher to focus on.

3. Based on the diagnosis and goals, what programme should I employ to assist my students? The literature is replete with many reading programmes such as pull out programmes. A student with particular reading problems is identified and may be taken out of the group for assistance in developing specific skills.
4. What methods should I use to evaluate my student's progress? The method applied should be related to what has been found in the diagnosis. Using our example, the teacher could interview the child to determine his or her enjoyment of reading. The teacher also could use criterion-referenced tests designed to focus on the skills that students should master.
5. What work done by the student can I use as indicator of the student's reading performance? What is expected of the teacher at this stage is to bring together different work that the student has done over the term or any defined period of time. Our model calls this activity the collection of work samples.
6. Based on the work samples, are there any discernible problems and strengths with a student's reading? To get an answer to this question, the teacher can conduct a work samples analysis. Such an analysis could, at this point in time, help with the further diagnosis of the students' problems and strengths.
7. What has the student learned? Why did he or she learn that information, and how did the learning take place? This is a reflection stage, and the teacher should use answers to these questions in redefining the goals.
8. Who needs information on what the student can do? Teachers, peers, and parents may need such information. Through open days, for example, parents can get such information. Days also may be set aside for children to share their work with other children and teachers in the school. Based on this sharing, the reading teacher can refine again his or her reading goals and objectives.

Conclusion

It is imperative at this point to outline what must be done to successfully implement the previously proposed reading assessment programme in an effort to get maximal benefits from reading programmes. A starting point is to put in place continuous upgrading and improvement programmes for teachers in reading. Therefore, a first step in enhancing the reading capability of students right from primary schools is to engage the services of reading specialists. Such specialists will not only assist in running teacher inservice courses but also can serve as referral points for children with reading problems that classroom teachers cannot handle. A study I conducted (2001) found that the current wind of change that advocates authentic assessment has not yet reached primary school special education teachers in Botswana, who were found to lack the knowledge base for such an innovation. The reason for such a situation could be traced to the teacher training programmes that have not emphasised the application of authentic assessment techniques.

Our assessment programme, as noted by its methods and diagnosis components, requires that teachers be familiar with and knowledgeable about authentic assessment procedures. Therefore, we must look closely at the assessment component of teacher training programmes. Such programmes should, as a matter of priority, ensure the acquisition of knowledge about and skills of conventional and authentic assessment practices for would-be teachers. It is our hope that this programme will lead to improved reading ability among students in developing countries.

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SECTION 6

The Concentrated Language Encounter Programme for Literacy Success in Developing Countries

Concentrated Language Encounter: A Revolutionary Approach to Teaching Literacy

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Thailand

Goals in Literacy Improvement

In the new millennium, there certainly will be a higher level of communication as a result of the technological advances that will emerge. On the negative side will be the worry of higher competition, which will result in a widening gap in living standards between the rich and the poor, increased violence, population growth, unequal food distribution, globalization versus regionalism and fragmentation, environmental deterioration, and the loss of cultural values. These issues are just some of the problems we will face. According to the UNICEF report on the plight of children in the new millennium (Seree, 1999), the standard of living of more than half of the world's population will be under poverty level, with many of the poverty-stricken being in Africa and Asia. It is estimated that only 1 of every 10 children will have a better standard of life in the new millenium. Poverty will be a serious global issue and will have a major impact on nations' educational reform planning because literacy education is considered to be the only solution to solving the poverty problem on a long-term basis.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has placed emphasis on "functional literacy," which involves communicating through the use of critical thought processes and adapting knowledge to other subject areas. Functional literacy is the most important level of literacy in terms of how to improve or develop a community as a whole. In a contemporary context, literacy is increasingly being related to community and workplace processes and to educational contexts. Information processing has become more sophisticated for both social participation and economic performance. Rapidly changing demands mean that children need to acquire and experience proper literacy learning to live a better life.

UNESCO (1998) has identified the following four pillars of education for the new millennium:

1. Learning to know: acquiring understanding and knowledge through discovery. This concept is coupled with learning how to learn by developing the ability to concentrate, memorize information, and think carefully.
2. Learning to do: involves occupational skills, the ability to deal with changing employment situations, and working as part of a team.
3. Learning to live together: involves cooperative learning situations so the learners are working together towards a common goal.
4. Learning to be: involves the process of learning what lies within the individual. The focus is on knowing oneself and being able to act in harmony with others.

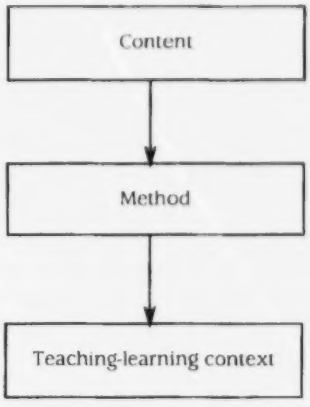
Essentially, a literacy-teaching program should be planned to attain the functional goal of literacy and all four pillars of successful education. The effective literacy-teaching program in the new millennium should not only integrate language skills for communicative performance but also enhance the capacity for creative thinking.

The Concentrated Learning Encounters Explained

Concentrated Language Encounters (CLE) is a revolutionary approach that has been proven very successful in literacy education. The CLE methodology was developed during the 1980s in the remote regions of Australia for children of the aboriginal population. Gray (1983) and Walker developed the notion of CLE to refer to the generation of a significant learning situation in which students learn language through its use. The focus, as Gray and Walker perceive it, must always be on the texts to be used to undertake tasks of various kinds and on learning in order to deal with significant new information. Gray points out that traditional approaches to the development of language programs for aboriginal children often had failed because they made the wrong assumptions about language learning and because they were conceived in the wrong order. Early approaches mostly concentrated on identifying "content and skills" that children need to learn and then listed these in terms of such concepts as syntax, skills, or functions understood in a somewhat isolated way. A teaching method has developed that aims to teach the content and, finally, some sense of teaching-learning context has emerged. The traditional plan, Gray suggests, might be represented as in Figure 1.

The method Gray and his colleagues developed to serve the needs of the aboriginal children at Traeger Park sought to reverse the usual order for curriculum planning and to concentrate instead on the context for learning and the development of language abilities within the context. The plan was the most desirable way to develop "natural" approaches to language learning, and it also would allow children the best opportunity to become effective, literate learners. The model for curriculum planning appears in Figure 2.

FIGURE 1 CLE teaching plan



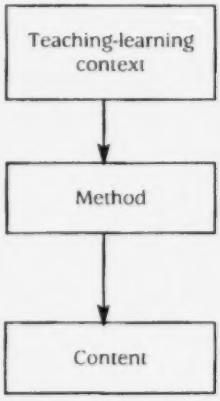
From Gray, B. (1985). Helping children become language learners in the classroom. In M. Christie (Ed.), *Aboriginal perspectives on experience and learning: The role of language in aboriginal education.* Geelong, VIC, Australia: Deakin University Press, p. 88. Used with permission.

Concentrated Language Encounter Methodology

The CLE methodology encompasses the four pillars of education previously mentioned.

Learning to know. A CLE program uses activities and literature to expand the students' knowledge and understanding. Most importantly, all reading, writing, and discussions are based on a

FIGURE 2 CLE curriculum planning



- Develop contexts, which encourage natural language-learning strategies
- Determine methodology, which sustains such strategies
- Determine:
  - The most effective representation of language content which meets the requirements of the contexts and method
  - The most effective organization of content for meeting the learner's present and future needs.

From Gray, B. (1985). Helping children become language learners in the classroom. In M. Christie (Ed.), *Aboriginal perspectives on experience and learning: The role of language in aboriginal education.* Geelong, VIC, Australia: Deakin University Press, p. 88. Used with permission.

shared experience at the beginning of the program unit. What is said or written is interlinked with what is happening in a well-structured activity that is of central, practical interest to the students. An underlying principle of the program is the concept of "scaffolding." The tasks that students are expected to do first are modeled by the instructor, who then helps students perform the same task but provides less and less support as students increasingly become more able to work unaided. This progression prepares each child for the task and ensures the task's successful completion.

Learning to do. The CLE program has two kinds of learning units—text-based and activity-based. The students can be involved in practical activities, using real-life experiences. The types of activities used in the program are unlimited. They can be vocational skills or knowledge-based processes.

Learning to live together. The CLE process of learning is dynamic and group-oriented. The conference group and small group activities are always organized for students to experience their reading, writing, learning, and speaking around the core practical activities. Each person contributes to the successful completion of the tasks, such as negotiating the text and making a Big Book. The Big Books can be used as resources.

Learning to be. The nature of personal interactions within the class ensures dignity and respect for each child. The CLE programs offer children the opportunity to develop their intellect, judgment ability, creativity, feelings, relationships, and imagination.

Research studies on CLE projects in Thailand, Laos, and Bangladesh (Rattanavich, 1997) have found that most students who were using their native language could achieve functional literacy skills within three months. The students who were second-language speakers could achieve functional literacy skills within six months. Also, most of the students showed extremely positive attitudes towards learning. They enjoyed reading and writing much more than they ever had before.

CLE methodology has been developed into three stages or models of teaching to enhance the learners' capacities in language use, creative thinking, and practical life improvement a different levels (according to learners' aptitudes, intelligence, needs, and potential). Learners of different intelligence levels can work together and maintain their own paces of learning naturally. The CLE program stages are as follows:

- **Stage 1** is used for nonreaders and beginning readers. The objective at this stage is to make the learners enthusiastic readers who are able to write simple texts of various kinds. The emphasis is on enjoying reading and writing and becoming successful users of the written language. With this skill comes self-improvement because the learners have been taught how to learn, and they enjoy the learning process.
- **Stage 2** is used for the learners who have begun to read and write independently. It is aimed at widening the range of text types that the learners can read and write. Learners cover most of the texts that are used in everyday life such as letters, advertisements, bus and train schedules, receipts, invoices, brochures, owners' manuals, and newspapers.
- **Stage 3** is used for the advanced learners, emphasizing learning through reading and writing and offering further experiences with texts. The overall objective is to provide all the literacy skills that the learners will ever need when they leave school and the learning skills that they will need at a higher level.

The genre-based approach has been used to plan for the starter text (Rattanavich & Christie, 1993). A genre is a text type having a characteristic overall shape—technically called a schematic structure—and the object of a linguistic enquiry is to identify the elements of this structure and the linguistic resources on which the structure is built. In all three stages, the content of the text that the learners process is chosen on the basis of what is more likely to improve their prospects and their enjoyment of life. The topics may include basic health and hygiene, public health, morals, norms of conduct, arts, crafts, culture, science, business procedures, community decision-making, teamwork and cooperation, preservation of the environment, agriculture, and/or other aspects of local and national life.

CLE methodology and techniques in teaching literacy can be adapted effectively not only for elementary school children in formal educational programs but also for adults, street children, and special groups of children such as the disabled, the deaf, and the blind. Within each stage of the program unit, the teacher and students work through different phases in a fixed sequence, as shown in Table 1.

Using CLE, the teacher has a critical role in scaffolding appropriate models of language. The learners are given opportunities to practice the use of language in real-life situations and in a supportive environment in which they are encouraged to take risks in order to become better learners. The consequence of this strategy is that even the less confident students find themselves doing things in reading and writing much sooner than they expected and continue to profit from working within a teaching-learning context that is always marked by cooperation and positive feedback. The encouragement encapsulates at least part of what causes students to learn quickly and well within the CLE programs.

In a CLE program, the focus is always on what the children need to know and are able to do. The emphasis is on the kinds of texts they need to be able to use and the kinds of information that they need in order to succeed in their communities.

CLE Project Implementation in Thailand

Thailand's traditional approaches for teaching literacy, both in Thai and in English, always had perceived language in terms of the various small elements into which it can be broken up and taught, including such things as syntax and parsing, and phonics and spelling. This perception was based on the learning theory that assumes that students must learn all these elements in isolation before they can put the elements together to create coherent language. However, the difficulty with such learning theory is that it divorces language from considerations of purpose and meaning, and it is contrary to the most recent understandings about how language is learned. In fact, research suggests that language is learned through using text that is a coherent stretch of language in which meaning is built up and negotiated in many ways. (See Christie, 1987; Gray, 1987.)

In 1985, Walker and his team introduced the CLE teaching method to Srinakharinwirot University Demonstration School in Thailand and set up a program there. The small project on CLE was centered at the Research and Language Teaching Development Center at the university with funding from Rotary. The initial project demonstrated that students taught under the CLE method developed speaking, writing, and reading abilities far above students learning from tra-

TABLE 1 Phases of instruction in CLE stages

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
A. Text-based	1. Analyzing the model text	1. Orientation using contextualization, mapping, text organization survey, genre establishment, and dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary
1. Shared reading of a starter text	2. Linking the text to personal experience	2. Reflections using the format for simple writing
2. Recalling the text, discussing the text, and being involved in role-play	3. Negotiating a new text	3. Note taking
3. Negotiating a group text	4. Critically analyzing a new text	4. Synthesis
4. Making the Big Book	5. Language activities and elaboration	5. Editing
5. Language activity through games		6. Final copy and elaboration
B. Activity-based		
6. Sharing a structured experience		
7. Reconstructing the experience (phases 3, 4, and 5 are similar to those of the text-based unit)		

ditional techniques. The CLE program was later introduced in the remote northwestern region of Thailand, which has an ethnically diverse range of people. The program was funded through the 3H grant of the Foundation of Rotary International (Rotary International, 1987). In the program, key personnel (inservice teachers, supervisors, and administrators) were trained using CLE techniques for teaching literacy. The results showed a significant improvement in students' spoken and written language; a noticeable enhancement of students' self-expression, personal development, positive reading and writing attitudes, creative thinking development, and team cooperation skills; and a decrease in drop-out levels (Rattanavich, 1997). The initial projects were so successful that the Thai government expanded the CLE teaching techniques nationwide.

Conclusion

The CLE project has since been successfully replicated in other developing countries such as Bangladesh, Laos, the Solomon Islands, Nepal, India, the Philippines, Brazil, Egypt, and Turkey. More recently, it has been introduced in African countries such as South Africa and Nigeria. The CLE method shows great promise as an inexpensive and simple program that can reverse reading failure in African schools.

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Literacy Development: Lessons Learned From a Pilot Concentrated Language Encounter Project in South Africa

David Donald, Janet Condy, and Jana Forrester

South Africa

This paper describes the outcomes of a pilot project conducted from 1998 to 2000 that involved 79 teachers of grades 1–3 in 7 schools, which was designed to predate an expanded Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) literacy development program in the Western Cape region of South Africa. The CLE program involves approximately 4,800 teachers of grades 1–7) in 490 schools and is scheduled to run from 2001 to 2005. The purpose of the paper is to point out the lessons that were learned from the pilot project before engaging with the expanded program and to highlight the value of such pilot projects in general.

The CLE program, which originated as a response to high failure rates and a lack of literacy among aboriginal students in the Northern Territory of Australia (Walker, Rattanavich, & Oller, 1992) is, in essence, a structured and systematic approach to literacy improvement in developing social contexts. In particular, the CLE approach provides for second-language speakers who need time to assimilate the language of instruction. It exposes students to language activities that simultaneously use listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Based within the language-experience tradition (Stauffer, 1970) and making use of Vygotskian notions of the development of spoken, read, and written language through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1934/1978), Brunerian principles of scaffolding, and active learning pedagogy (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), the CLE program has been translated into an articulated structure of learning stages, teaching processes, and expected outcomes (Walker, Rattanavich, & Oller, 1992).

CLE programs have a well-documented track record in other developing social contexts (Walker, Rattanavich, & Oller, 1992). The general field of literacy development is strewn with a competitive array of methods and approaches. However, very few of the methods can claim specific relevance in developing social contexts and fewer still can demonstrate success on a scale such as has been achieved in the Thailand national CLE program (Walker & Rattanavich, 1992). In a multilingual, developing context in which a widespread lack of literacy was of concern, the Thai-language CLE program, beginning with a trial in 1987, was so successful that through the early and mid-1990s, it was adopted by the Thai Ministry of Education, and it eventually extended across all regions of the country. Closely monitored and evaluated, the program demonstrated substantive benefits in the development of Thai reading and writing skills in students from a wide range of differing first-language backgrounds. The initial CLE program has been followed by extension of the program into teaching English as a foreign language through CLE processes.

As a means of addressing the issue of literacy development in the *specific* South African educational and social context, the program has the following points of relevance:

- It links community development with the teaching of literacy. In brief, this connection is simply but very effectively made through generating learning activities and texts that have

immediate meaning—and often utilitarian value—to the children in their particular community contexts. (For example, the growing of a vegetable garden). In South Africa, this approach has the advantage of addressing widespread poverty issues affecting children (e.g., health, nutrition, hygiene, and so on). Also, through its relevance and especially its utilitarian effects, the program has the potential to reduce some of the pragmatic reasons for early school drop-out that are so common, particularly in poor and rural areas in South Africa (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 1997).

- As found in Thailand, the CLE program is especially well-designed to assist children learning to read in a second language. Given the complexity and sensitivity of the language situation in South Africa and the current emphasis on multilingual learning (Heugh, Siegrühn, & Plüddeman, 1995), this capacity of the CLE program may take on considerable importance in this context.
- The cost effectiveness of the CLE program has been specifically emphasised by Walker and Rattanavich in their discussion of its value in developing countries (1992). In the current context of severe budgetary constraints within all education departments in South Africa, this factor will become significant if the program is to be adopted more widely in the Western Cape or nationally.

The CLE Process and Methodology

Rattanavich (1992) gives a full description of the program. Briefly stated, it involves three stages directed at the lower, middle, and upper primary grades, respectively. Stage 1, with which this pilot project was primarily concerned, involves activity-based and text-based units divided up into five successive phases. The initial stimulus is either a text or an activity that the teacher shares with the whole class.

A. Text-based stimulus

- Phase 1: The teacher begins with a story or a series of pictures. The teacher then reads the "starter book" (see the section on "contextualization" of materials later in this paper) in the main language of instruction (English, Xhosa, and Afrikaans are the main languages spoken in this region of South Africa), stopping to discuss important points and encouraging students to engage with the story by predicting events and outcomes. In this way, the teacher ensures that the students understand the story, who the characters are, and what the essence of the plot is. Where there are students in the class whose first languages differ, the teacher will read the story in each of the relevant languages, using the opportunity to teach the class elements of each language.
- Phase 2: The teacher encourages as much spoken language interaction as possible, asking open questions that stimulate the students to retell the story in their own words. The storytelling is often expanded through mime, singing, drama, and role play, which involves all the students in different ways. This phase allows the teacher to assess whether all the students have grasped the story. If not, he or she returns to phase 1 and repeats the storytelling with more questions and engagement.
- Phase 3: The teacher prepares large, blank sheets of paper, which are pasted on the chalkboard. The students are encouraged to retell the story in their own words but are guided to come to a consensus about the wording to be used. The teacher mediates the discussion, ensuring that the students get the correct sequence of events. As the students reach a decision about each sentence they want to write, the teacher transcribes it on the paper, sounding out every word as they proceed and rereading each sentence as the story builds. The teacher edits and corrects the language where necessary by asking questions such as "How can we say this differently and/or better?" The students decorate the different pages with pictures depicting the events. This stage of discussing ("negotiating") the text tends to happen over a few days, especially in the lower grades. The text remains on display until the unit has been completed, with students using it for reference purposes.

At this stage the teacher organises the classroom into groups of, ideally, four to six students.

- Phase 4: In the lower grades, where students cannot write legibly yet, the teacher makes several Big Books by rewriting the texts in large formats, which the students use in their groups as workbooks and readers. When the students are able to transcribe legibly, they make their own group books by allocating different tasks to each other (e.g., one writes, one draws the picture, one numbers the pages, and so on).
- Phase 5: The teacher organises the classroom into activity centres at which different language games are played. The Big Books are used as the sources to look up words, check spellings, complete sentences, and so on. Different games and activities are used to expand students language skills such as phonic knowledge, word building, sentence construction, and use of grammatical structures.

B. Activity-based stimulus

The teacher demonstrates an activity—such as planting beans—that is chosen consciously to have specific relevance in the social context concerned and to the students' interest and level of development.

- Phase 1: The teacher introduces a structured activity by naming the materials and demonstrating the steps involved with performing the activity. The students are encouraged to talk about the activity, citing their own experiences. Then, the students do the activity themselves. (The activity also may relate to an outing or happening that the class members have experienced collectively.)
- Phase 2: The students are encouraged to retell their experiences. The teacher ensures that they can recall the exact sequence of events, correcting them where necessary and, if needed, repeating the demonstration.
- Phases 3–5 follow the same sequence as a text-based activity.

In this way, the methodology purposefully links listening, speaking, reading, and writing to students' own experiential background and understanding.

Stages 2 and 3 of the method progressively develop the students' ability to understand, read, and write within different genres of text (for example, narrative as opposed to informational text). The same pedagogic processes are emphasized, and students' abilities to discuss, develop comprehension strategies, and work creatively with both textual content and form are gradually built up through structured phases from the middle to the upper primary grades.

By contrast, although literacy instruction varies in different social contexts in South Africa, the process of instruction that is most characteristic of the majority of disadvantaged schools tends to be teacher-centred, with a traditionally conservative focus on direct instruction. Table 1 on page 152 summarises the essential differences between the CLE and traditional approaches.

The Project

Since the initial planning and inception of the programs in late 1997, both the pilot project and the expanded CLE program have constituted a joint venture between Rotary International and the Western Cape Education Department. The fact that the program has been accepted by and formally linked to a state department of education is crucially important in terms of both its current and future credibility and sustainability. As proved in the Thailand program, such a linkage provides the only viable base from which a literacy program of this nature can take on any regional or national significance.

There have been two major tasks to achieve in the course of the pilot project. First, as stated by Walker (1992), any prospective CLE program has to ensure that time is devoted to developing and adapting all dimensions of the program—from learning activities and materials to workshop manuals and teacher training procedures—so they are appropriate for the particular social and educational context of application. The second task has been to pretest the effectiveness of the CLE approach to literacy teaching with teachers and students in the context of a small sample of schools

TABLE 1 Contrasted literacy instruction approaches: CLE versus traditional

The CLE Classroom	The Traditional Classroom
Content	
• Culturally and socially appropriate: often generated from the students own needs and life experience.	• Tends to be drawn from prescribed material: not always appropriate or relevant to student needs or experience.
Learning Activities	
• Students are encouraged to work independently. • Games and songs are used to liven up the learning. • Students often read and play language-learning games in free time.	• Students generally do only what the teacher tells them to do. • Games and songs are sometimes, but not always, used. • Students seldom read or write outside class lessons.
Classroom Interaction	
• Students learn by interacting with other students and with the teacher. • Discussion ("negotiation") of meaning by students, with teacher as mediator, is a central principle. • Flexibility of pace, according to student need, is critical. Slower learners are actively encouraged to participate at their level and pace.	• The teacher asks questions and selects the student(s) who should answer. • The emphasis is on teacher instruction and generally passive student reception. • Lessons tend to be content-driven, with a given amount of material to be covered. This approach tends to marginalise slower learners.
Classroom Management	
• Students often work in small groups, actively discussing and cooperating. • Students frequently manage their own activities. • Discipline is positive—encouragement and praise oriented.	• Students usually work seated in rows, as a class group, with little interaction. • Students await direction from the teacher before speaking or acting. • Discipline is negative. Students are controlled by prohibition and punishment.
Teaching Methodology	
• Child-centred. • A variety of teaching methods are consciously interchanged according to elements of the program and different students' need. • Individual and group problem-solving is encouraged. • Scaffolding is a central principle and is actively used to encourage individual and group conceptual and skill development.	• Teacher-centred. • Teachers tend to use only a favoured method—usually direct instruction—with an emphasis on repetition and rote learning. • Teachers disseminate information, with an emphasis on "right" or "wrong" responses. • Little scaffolding takes place.
Communicative Confidence	
• Because all students are encouraged to participate actively, communicative confidence is developed.	• Although a few participate actively, the majority of students in a class tend to be passive and unengaged. Communicative confidence tends to be poorly developed in the uninvolved students.
Assessment	
• Assessment is continuous, formative, and integral to all activities.	• Assessment tends to be summative and separated from the ongoing learning process.

in the Western Cape before attempting the expanded program in this region.

The Selection of Schools to Participate in the Pilot Project

Despite structural transformations that have taken place in the post-apartheid South African education system, many schools still experience substantial social and educational disadvantages. The adequate development of literacy skills is a major national issue, particularly insofar as it manifests in such contexts. Therefore, schools selected for the CLE program in the Western Cape (including the pilot project) were deliberately chosen from the neediest and most disadvantaged schools in terms of literacy development in the region.

To give some idea of the difficulties associated with literacy development, the following are some typical characteristics of the social and educational contexts of the schools involved in the pilot program:

- extensive poverty, high rates of unemployment, and poor public services (such as libraries) in the communities concerned. This is associated with a frequent lack of adult literacy and, therefore, often with low levels of parents' involvement in school programs and feelings of inadequacy in relation to the literacy development of their children.
- generally under-resourced schools. This includes insufficient numbers of classrooms, usually no library facilities, inadequate classroom and learning materials, and teacher-student ratios often as high as 1:60.
- teacher underqualification, lack of informed literacy teaching skills, and inadequate support services. Together with the other disadvantages, these characteristics frequently result in low teacher morale and poor motivation.
- the combination of all these factors results in generally low standards of scholastic progress, high failure and attrition rates, and inadequate development of literacy in the students concerned.

For the pilot project, 10 such disadvantaged schools were initially identified within 3 districts of the Western Cape on the basis of achieving some degree of balance between urban and rural schools and in terms of language medium (Afrikaans, English, and Xhosa). Following consultations with the principals concerned, all 10 schools agreed to join the project in the first quarter of 1998. (Subsequent feedback from teachers, however, indicated that teacher involvement in the initial decision to participate might have increased motivation and cooperation).

The Process of Project Development

In all, 79 teachers were trained in CLE during the pilot project, and 3,054 children in grades 1–3 were involved in learning through a CLE approach. The following processes took place in the development of the pilot project.

CLE training workshops for grade 1–3 teachers were phased in from 1998 to 2000. Two facilitators, both having received extensive training and onsite experience in Thailand, guided groups of teachers through the CLE rationale and specific classroom procedures. Using a cumulative learning strategy, the training workshops were successively phased in according to the relevant phases of the CLE Stage 1 methodology. Between workshops, facilitators visited teachers at their schools on a regular basis to see how they were doing, to help with questions and problems, and to refine points of methodology. Teacher feedback indicated that this facilitation had been particularly helpful.

Over this period, basic classroom materials required in the CLE methodology (flip charts, crayons, and so on), teachers' manuals with explicit directions in the three relevant languages, demonstration videos, and "starter books" suitable for the local context were developed, tried out, revised, and ultimately printed and packaged in readiness for the expanded program.

In 1999, an evaluative questionnaire was administered to all participating teachers. In addition, a small comparative study on the performance of two samples of grade 3s—one group who had and another group who had not been involved in CLE teaching during the three years of the pilot project—was set up between 1999 and 2000.

Outcomes

Sustainability. By mid-1999, 7 of the 10 schools that had been selected and had agreed to participate in the program were functioning well with CLE processes. Three schools, however, had barely got going, mainly due to poor administrative and managerial structure and insufficient support to CLE teachers from school management. Because these three schools were not participating effectively in the pilot project by the end of 1999, they had to be withdrawn. The problem with sustainability, and the reasons that appear to be behind it, were important to note, especially in relation to the intended, and much larger, expanded program.

"Contextualization" of materials. "Starter books" written in English, Xhosa, and Afrikaans (i.e., multilingual text), with content and illustrations appropriate for each of the three grade levels, were developed by the CLE trainers and tried in schools. On the basis of teacher feedback, the starter books found to be most engaging and enjoyed by students were refined and printed. Although several of the starter books have universal content themes, a number of other books have content and illustrations that are specific to the South African context. Given the emphasis on multilingual learning in South Africa, the use of multilingual text in starter books may well prove to be a new and important language exposure strategy in South Africa.

Teachers' perspective. The questionnaire completed by all participating teachers in April 1999 comprised 13 outcome and process-related questions (see Figure 1). Thematic analysis of the responses revealed the following most common observations.

Outcome-related, positive observations:

- The CLE approach makes teaching language and reading more flexible and more student-centred and makes individualisation more possible.
- The integration of language skills (oral, read, and written) and teaching students through their own language creates ease and relevance of learning.
- The creation of reading materials in the classroom (language-experience) increases motivation because the content is appropriate to students' contexts and needs.
- Students participate more actively in the learning process. They are more creative, engage readily in group work, express their own opinions, learn from each other, and so on.
- Early development of, and confidence in, writing skills was commented on by a number of teachers.
- For Xhosa speakers, even many common words are long (morphemically complex, with multiple prefixes and suffixes), and

FIGURE 1 Teacher questionnaire (April 1999)

1. What has this approach taught you about teaching reading and language skills?
2. How does this differ from what you did in the past?
3. Is it better teaching literacy skills this way? If so, in what way(s) and why?
4. What do you like and/or not like about the way you have been trained?
5. What problems do you experience with this approach to teaching language, reading, and spelling?
6. What would you change if you were doing the training?
7. How have your students benefited from this teaching approach?
8. Do you think your students at the end of last year were more equipped in terms of language and reading than in previous years?
9. How do you like the idea of developing materials for reading?
10. Do you have enough materials to use without developing your own? If so, what do you use?
11. Do you understand more about the teaching of reading now that you are involved with this project? If so, how has it helped you?
12. Would you like to be involved with training more teachers and/or developing writing materials for this approach?
13. How do you assess the students at the beginning of the year? What assessment procedures do you use during the term and/or year to reassess their progress?

children often struggle to read them in the initial stages. Evidence was that CLE, with its emphasis on meaning, had helped students in this learning process.

Observations reflecting problems:

The process seemed to benefit some students more than others: Progress with slower students was difficult as they tend to memorise the text and rely on the quicker students, who became bored if time was spent on the slower students.

Process-related, positive observations:

- There were many positive observations, including an appreciation of the clear, step-by-step process of the training; follow-up from the trainers; the usefulness of the materials provided; and meeting other schools and exchanging ideas.

Observations reflecting problems:

- Teachers expressed problems with the distances they had to travel to attend workshops and with having to give up Saturdays to participate in the project. (A sense of coercion also was expressed here that might be avoided with greater teacher choice built into the project at the early stages).
- Phases 3–5 of stage 1 needed more attention because they were more difficult to put into practice than Phases 1–2.
- More practical demonstrations were needed to clarify the different phases, the group work, and how to cope with both slower and quicker students.
- Teachers expressed the need for more training in materials development, but the danger of teacher overload with more workshops also was apparent.

The above analysis clearly revealed that the CLE process was delivering a range of educationally important outcomes for both teachers and students. However, the problems and suggestions for change were as important to note as the positives.

Student performance. As previously mentioned, a small study was conducted to assess the effects of the CLE program on grade 3 student performance. Unlike the extensive outcome evaluation design of the extended program that has many more schools involved, this study was intended merely to provide some indication of the effects of CLE teaching on student performance within the broader purposes of the pilot project. The study focused on grade 3 because the students had had three years of CLE teaching. Given the small sample, these students could be contrasted more meaningfully with a control group of grade 3 students who had had no CLE teaching than they could be contrasted with grade 1 and 2 students who had had less.

Method. The evaluation method involved testing the level of reading and writing skills achieved by two samples of students at the end of grade 3. For simple control purposes, it was decided to use the same schools for both samples. Grade 3 students who had *not* experienced any CLE intervention were tested at the end of 1999. An equivalent sample of grade 3 students who *had* experienced CLE intervention over the three years of the project since grade 1 (1998, 1999, and 2000) were tested in 2000. A sample of one randomly chosen grade 3 class in each of five of the pilot schools (i.e., half of the original 10) was used, which involved 170 students in 1999 and 180 in 2000.

To measure reading skills, a cloze procedure test was used, which involved a passage of text in which readers were required to fill in deletions of selected words on the basis of semantic and syntactic cues derived from the continuous text. This test was selected because it reflected a reading-for-meaning process, an important ingredient in the CLE teaching methodology. Cloze tests also had been successfully used in the Thailand evaluation. A dictation test was used to measure accuracy of written language. Both forms of testing are specifically mentioned by Oller (1992) as appropriate for CLE assessment.

Results. In reading, the mean of correct responses obtained on the cloze test was 22% for the non-CLE group (1999) and 21% for the CLE group (2000). The difference was not statistically significant ($t = 0.68$; df 348; NS).

In dictation, the mean of correct responses was 57% for the non-CLE group (1999) and 64% for

the CLE group (2000). The difference was statistically significant ($t = 2.54$; df 348; $p < .01$).

Interpretation. The poor scores and insignificant difference between the non-CLE and CLE groups in reading was not entirely unexpected. After the cloze test had been applied for the first time, it became apparent that the test was generally too difficult for the grade 3 level, particularly when translated from English into Afrikaans and Xhosa. (Over the whole sample, 30% of students scored only 1 or 0 on the test. This significantly reduced the discriminatory value of the test and the dispersion of scores.) At this stage in the pilot study, it was too late to modify the test. However, what was learned from the test application was that appropriate cloze passages for the different levels and languages would have to be more carefully graded and pretested before application in the expanded program.

The more normally distributed scores and the significant difference between the non-CLE and CLE groups on the dictation test were more encouraging. They were a positive indication that students who had experienced the CLE program were benefiting in terms of their written language skills.

Apart from the problems with the reading test, the relatively small sample of schools in this pilot study is reason to treat the results with some circumspection.

Conclusion

The positive outcomes evident from materials development, the teachers' perspective, and tentatively from the study of student performance were all indicators of the potential value of an expanded program using a CLE approach to teaching literacy in the South African context. This information, in itself, was an important purpose of the pilot project. However, equally important lessons about what should change or be actively built into the development and delivery of the expanded program also were learned.

First, in terms of sustainability, all three schools that dropped out of the pilot project had insufficient administrative and management capacities to maintain the intervention. Inevitably, this lack led to project goals and procedures being neglected. As noted by Mouton (1999) in his evaluation of the South African Thousand Schools Project, where programs involving teaching innovations are concerned, it is unwise to select schools that are unable to manage and administer such programs or to support their teachers in the process of the intervention. In such cases, it is lack of management capacity that frequently leads to failure rather than inadequacies in the teaching innovation itself. Therefore, the experience of the pilot project indicated that participating schools in the expanded program should be chosen with at least adequate administrative and managerial competence to support the teaching innovation involved in CLE.

The second lesson also was associated with sustainability. The pilot project revealed that the motivation and commitment of classroom teachers was a vital element that would need more attention in the expanded CLE program. Indications were that a greater degree of teacher involvement in the initial decision to participate in the pilot program would have been helpful. In addition, a number of practical and presentation issues relating to training workshops need to be noted and addressed (including timing, travel arrangements, practical demonstrations, training in materials development, and so on). The question of teacher overload was a possible warning sign that should be watched.

Third, the issue of how to accommodate slower students and prevent mere memorisation rather than active reading of text presented a challenging methodological problem. By looking at grouping procedures, ways of differentiating pace, and the time given to scaffolding for slower students, it is clear that this problem will have to be addressed creatively, particularly in the context of very large classes (often up to 60 students).

Fourth, the experience of the pilot study regarding student performance highlighted the necessity of establishing and pretesting appropriate difficulty levels in materials to be used for performance testing, especially in relation to specific language constraints. Although the deletion of particular words in English cloze passages may be predictable within a given text at a specific grade level, the same words appear to be more difficult to predict within the syntactic and orthographic structure of the same text translated into a differ-

ent language. This problem will require careful linguistic analysis of the cloze passages and the relevant deletions to be used in the expanded program, pretesting, and possible revisions based on pretesting results to ensure that the passages are equivalent and at an appropriate level of difficulty in the three languages for each grade level.

Fifth, from the positive feedback received during the pilot project, it was clear that ongoing support for teachers undertaking the CLE program was a critical dimension of the project's delivery. Sustained involvement, commitment, and support from the team of trainers for teachers will be an important element if the expanded CLE program is to succeed.

Finally, the most crucial and general lesson learned has been the importance of spending time and energy on an extended pilot project itself. The pilot not only has provided evidence of the potential value of the programme in its expanded form but it also has provided the opportunity to develop and refine relevant training and teaching materials; address important issues of sustainability and methodology; and practice and adapt the training, teaching, and testing procedures applied to this particular social and educational context. The benefits of such a pilot project can be generalised to almost any literacy intervention but particularly to developing and multilingual social contexts.

Postscript

Since the original writing of this paper, the outcome evaluation for the 2001 expanded program has been completed. It is gratifying to report that in the first year of the program—involving grades 1–3 in 85 schools and meant to expand progressively up to grade 7 in approximately 490 schools by 2005—the results on all student performance variables that were assessed were statistically significant in favour of the CLE schools as contrasted with matched control (non-CLE) schools. These data include results on an appropriately modified and pretested cloze test. The lessons learned from the pilot project, all of which were applied in the design and delivery of the first year of the expanded program, undoubtedly contributed to these positive outcomes.

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Lesson Learned From a Concentrated Language Encounter Pilot Project in Nigeria

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This paper reports the authors' experience in introducing Phase 1 of the Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) into primary 1 and 2 classes in Nigerian schools. The Rotary pilot project was brought to Plateau State in Central Nigeria by a member of the Reading Association of Nigeria who had attended an International Reading Association World Congress presentation on the CLE Project in Thailand. What was particularly impressive about the presentation was that the schools in Thailand were very similar to those in Nigeria, and there was a dramatic change in the Thai schools when CLE was introduced. The program has been adopted in other developing countries where its effectiveness has been demonstrated in a remarkably short time. It is also extremely cost effective because teachers develop most of their own materials, and learners write and make their own books. CLE allows the local educators to decide the informational content of the programme, which fosters understanding of the cultural heritage and increases awareness of medical, nutritional, environmental, and other matters that are important to their lives and to the general welfare of the country. All this information served as an incentive to pursue a linkage between the Reading Associa-tion of Nigeria and a local Nigerian Rotary Club, through which we received a grant from Rotary International for a pilot Light Houses for Literacy project.

After basic CLE training for the technical coordinator in Bangkok, Thailand, we were selected as members of the training team for the project. Our first task after undergoing a training-of-trainers workshop was to conduct a workshop for the four primary schools that we selected as pilot schools for the introduction of CLE into primary 1.

How We Selected the Pilot Schools

Our first decision in selecting the schools for the pilot project was to select both private and government schools, which was a deviation from the practice in most of the countries in which CLE has been adopted (where there is a partnership between the local education authority and Rotary International). Nigerian government schools had suffered years of neglect under military rule and were often on strike because staff members' salaries were not being paid. Therefore, we decided to use only one government school in our pilot project so even if another strike occurred, the other three schools involved with our project would continue functioning. We selected an urban government primary school with a large population of children, all of whom sit on the bare floor because of a lack of furniture. The second urban school is a demonstration school for deaf children that is run by the Department of Special Education at the University of Jos. The third school is a privately funded school on the campus of a village's leprosy and rehabilitation centre. The school admits physically handicapped children—who lodge there—and able-bodied children from the immediate community. Finally, we selected the staff school of a College of Education, also in a rural area. The main reason we chose this school was to give the opportunity to learn CLE techniques to the students of the College of Education, who are being trained as primary school teach-

ers. This school also serves as a demonstration school for the students.

In 1999, we held a two-week training workshop for all 19 primary 1 teachers and headteachers in the pilot schools. We brought primary 1 children from the government school and the school for deaf children to the workshop so the training would be a practical, hands-on experience. The workshop had the following objectives:

- Each teacher and headteacher will have a clear understanding of the philosophy behind CLE methodology and its implications for the reorientation of instructional practice in primary schools.
- Each teacher and headteacher will successfully demonstrate the full scope of the CLE methodology with a group of children.
- Each teacher and headteacher will write at least one starter book, which will be illustrated, photocopied, and coloured.

The dramatic progress of the pupils who took part in the workshop demonstrated the effectiveness of CLE methods. After only eight days, the children could read and write meaningfully in English, which was an encouragement to the project schools' teachers. The teachers from the government school, which has an extremely high failure rate and was on strike most of the session, were especially pleased with the outcome.

A Nigerian version of the *CLE Teachers Manual* was produced by the training team and given to each workshop participant. Each trainee wrote a starter book, which was professionally illustrated, produced, and photocopied for distribution to the schools. The entire workshop was professionally videotaped so a training film could be produced for future use.

Beginning the CLE Programme in the Pilot Schools

The teachers were excited about being part of an international project, and they embraced CLE enthusiastically. They were encouraged by the fact that starter kits—consisting of the materials the teachers would need such as marking pens and large sheets of paper and wooden easels for displaying the paper—were supplied to each class. In addition, each class was given mats so the children could sit on the floor around the teacher to listen to stories and do group work. (The government school with no chairs at all was given more mats so the children did not have to continue sitting on the bare floor.)

As members of the training team, we visited the teachers at work in their classes to offer support to them. We also held monthly zonal meetings with the teachers to review the implementation of the programme in the various schools, listen to teachers' problems, and give them the opportunity to share their experiences on how to overcome such problems. When it was possible, we also attended the first meeting of the pilot schools' Parent Teacher Associations in order to make sure the parents understood and appreciated the innovations taking place in their children's classrooms. To our delight, the parents were very enthusiastic because they had observed the remarkable achievements of their children in such a short period of time.

Introducing CLE in Year Two of the Project

In 2000, we held the second CLE training workshop for 73 teachers. The purpose of the workshop was to provide refresher training for the primary 1 teachers of the four schools that implemented CLE in the first year of the project and to provide new training for the teachers who first implemented CLE in the second year of the project. The new teachers also included the primary 1 teachers in the seven new schools that introduced CLE in primary 1 during the subsequent session and the primary 2 teachers from the four pilot schools in which CLE was extended to include both primary 1 and primary 2 classes. We continued with zonal meetings and visits to the schools to provide the support the teachers needed through out the second year of the project.

Achievements

The use of the CLE technique has produced encouraging results in the pilot schools. Children who

were taught using this technique could read the class readers and other literature materials with relative ease by the second term of the session. The children learned to express themselves in English (their second or third language) and to dramatise, retell, write, and illustrate their own stories, which they did with a lot of enthusiasm.

Both teachers and children have gained confidence in developing materials and resources for learning because of the CLE project. Thus, the acute shortage of textbooks and their high costs were no longer a barrier to teachers and students in conducting their literacy activities in class.

The lessons in the CLE classrooms are interactive, stimulating, and purposeful. Because of these characteristics, children have enjoyed their lessons and school activities. Their newfound love and interest for books is highly encouraging.

Problems and Prospects

Not everything with the CLE project is rosy, however. The project has been faced with some setbacks along the way. Large class populations make the work difficult for teachers because it is not easy to organise group work with a class with over 100 students. This problem is further compounded in some schools by a lack of spacious classrooms. There is also the problem of lack of security, especially in the government schools where classes do not have windows and doors. The result is that teachers have problems storing their CLE materials such as easels, mats, and displays of children's work. Other problems, especially in the government school, include the transfer of CLE teachers and headteachers to other schools and the admission of new students into the class throughout the year. We also found that some teachers revert to their traditional instruction methods if they are not well supervised. We have not yet solved the problem of how to ensure adequate follow-up of teachers in CLE classes.

Despite the problems, our experience shows that CLE really works, even in the most adverse conditions. In schools in which there is very low morale among teachers, the mere fact that the teachers experience success for the first time fosters a badly needed sense of professionalism among them. We have made a very small beginning in just one state in Nigeria, but we now know that progress can be made. We are looking forward to an opportunity to expand our project because we are convinced that widespread reading failure in Nigerian schools can be reversed with a CLE programme.

My Experience Using a Concentrated Language Encounter to Develop Literacy Skills in Persons With Learning Handicaps

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In Nigeria, literacy instruction for individuals with learning difficulties—including mental retardation—has been viewed as a human rights and equality issue for years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981). Vocational training has been the major aim in schooling for so-called special people, and sometimes literacy instruction has been over-shadowed by these activities. However, being literate empowers individuals—including people with learning difficulties—to be effective consumers, to keep informed about recreational and other lifestyle options, to read enthusiastically and for relaxation and enjoyment, and to further their knowledge of people and places that can provide them with information for conversation and social interaction. It has been suggested that these goals could be addressed through continued literacy instruction (Van Kraayenoord, 1992). However, community expectations of special people are low, which has discouraged the idea of continued literacy instruction for them.

This paper discusses the development of literacy skills in people with learning difficulties who attend the Special Education and Reading Centre in Central Nigeria at Jos, which is run by a non-governmental organization called Open Doors for Special Learners. The information in this paper is based on my personal experiences teaching special people in the clinic by using the Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) approach. The CLE method recognises reading as the process of a reader reconstructing a message from print and accepts such a reader as an active language user. The CLE approach also accepts the view that an actively involved reader learns on the basis of such psychological factors as self-motivation, inherent interest, and positive attitude. Above all, when teaching learning-disabled students, I have used a method that demonstrates respect for and acceptance of the language experience each learner brings with him or her to the school setting.

In February 2001, I started a CLE programme with seven male students who were enrolled in the Special Education Unit of the Centre. The age range of the students was 13–26 years, and they were all nonreaders except for one autistic boy with good word recognition skills but poor comprehension. One student had poor vision and could hardly see without moving very close to the board or paper.

Programme Description

The programme description shows how I followed each of the five CLE phases and the modifications I made to meet the special needs of the students.

Phase 1: Shared Reading or Shared Activity

The aim of phase 1, when using shared reading, is to have learners come to a firm understanding of the story in the starter text from its overall structure to what happened, who did what, what the characters' qualities are, and how to interpret the text. I had to select our starter books carefully, based on the distinctive needs of the participants and bearing their learning difficulties in mind.

Therefore, simple, straightforward books with strong storylines and a lot of repetition were picked (e.g., *My Noah's Ark Book of Colors*, Palmer, 1995).

When I used a shared activity for phase 1, the students learned how to string beads to make a necklace and a bracelet. In this phase, the students outlined the steps of making a necklace while I demonstrated the process. The activity helped stimulate students' language usage, bring out the students' creativity from within, and make learning seem more meaningful and practical to them.

Because all the students had experienced academic failures, I needed to create a positive and encouraging learning atmosphere. Therefore, learning was informal and relaxed, and there was free interaction between me and the students and among the students.

Phase 2: Reviewing the Shared Story or Shared Activity

The aim of phase 2 is to have the learners recall and talk about the shared story or activity from phase 1. I made sure that the students understood the meaning of the stories I read and that they could talk about the characters and what they did. Then, the students chose roles and acted out the story. For example, when I used *My Noah's Ark Book of Colors*, one student acted as God, another was Noah, some were Noah's family members, and still others were birds and animals. Some students were not able to speak standard English, so I allowed them to speak pidgin English. When the students were free to express themselves, even with their limited language skills, they developed confidence in their ability to play roles in the drama and were able to use new vocabulary and phrases in the nonthreatening environment.

With activity-based units, students recalled steps in making a necklace and demonstrated how to make a necklace from beads. The students worked as a group and helped one another. At this stage, each student showed appreciation and acceptance of the others.

Phase 3: Negotiating a Group Text

Learners negotiated an entire written text by recalling and telling the sequence of events sentence by sentence for me to write on a large sheet of paper. The students were allowed to dictate the story to fit their own thoughts. Although the story was based on *My Noah's Ark Book of Colors*, the students agreed on changes and additions to the original story to create their own storybook.

Phase 4: Reading

In phase 4, the learners read with me the negotiated text, which had been made into a Big Book. We read together in chorus, with the children taking turns pointing to the words in the Big Book.

Phase 5: Language Activities and Games

Special learners need much more repetition than normal children do. By using language games, the special learners with whom I worked had the opportunity to practice language skills without boredom. The students enjoyed the following activities:

- recognising words that occur in the Big Book and playing word card games such as match-word and word hunt
- reading sentences that contain words from the Big Book and playing reading competition games such as word matching, pair work, and fill in the word
- spelling words from the Big Book and creating new words, crossword puzzles, sentence completions, and look-a-like words

How Well Did CLE Work With the Special Learners?

Within seven months, the special learners showed remarkable signs of achievement.

Motivation and interest. The students now take the initiative to pick storybooks from the centre's library. This action shows self-motivation, interest, and the ability to make meaning of print. The students also discuss pictures from storybooks and are able to predict sequencing of events in the story.

Expansion of spoken vocabulary. The students now have new words and expressions that they use when speaking (e.g., "I am reading my storybook," "I am drawing a man," "We are going to build an ark," and "There was a heavy rainfall.")

Ability to make and read books. The students are now authors and illustrators. Some of them can read their books fairly well at an independent level, but a few students still need assistance.

Ability to read simple storybooks. The majority of the students can read simple storybooks books with little assistance.

Ability to write books. The students can now copy down their stories correctly, although some of them need assistance during editing of their work. Their handwriting has improved considerably.

Ability to organise a drama from a story. The students are able to assign roles to themselves and act out dramas from a storybook with little assistance from a teacher. From this activity, they also are learning to accept responsibility regarding their daily schoolwork.

Ability to be creative with their hands. The students have learned from this program how to make beaded necklaces and bracelets without assistance from the teacher.

Ability to illustrate. The students can illustrate their storybooks with original drawings different from the illustrations in the starter books. Their drawings now show more originality and are less stereotyped.

Conclusion

The following concepts worked for me during my time with the special students:

- I recognised and accepted their strengths above their weaknesses.
- I praised every little positive effort made by the student(s).
- I encouraged positive efforts and achievement by giving rewards in the form of stars.
- I encouraged my students to read to others at home and in school.
- I displayed my students' work on the classroom wall.
- I used every given opportunity to boast about my students' achievements.
- I always used familiar words in simple language.
- I used simple storybooks during reading sessions.
- I used well-illustrated books that attracted the students' interest.
- The students enjoyed describing events in their own words, and this activity was encouraged.
- I encouraged them to predict events in a story, and they learned to enjoy making predictions.
- I allowed the interjection of personal opinions about the stories, and I encouraged the participation of each student.
- I accepted the uniqueness of individual students and established a good working rapport in an atmosphere conducive to fruitful literacy interactions.
- I personally took interest in each student to get to know each individual's background, and I also interacted with the students as a family.

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SECTION 7

Literacy Instruction in the Mother Tongue

Improving Literacy in Primary Schools in Nigeria Through the Mother Tongue

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Where the literacy level achieved through primary education is generally very low, as is the case in parts of Nigeria, literacy instruction in the student's primary language has been shown to help improve the situation. From my experience in the Obolo language project, significant gains in literacy competence can be made when literacy instruction in the student's mother tongue is added to the curriculum even when no other improvements are made.

Background

Apart from elite private schools, primary education in Nigeria generally does not achieve one of its major objectives—"the inculcation of permanent literacy" (Fafunwa, Macauley, & Sokoya, 1989). Why do the elite schools succeed while the urban poor and rural schools do not? There are many known factors. Some of the major negative factors in the schools from the 1980s until recently have been overcrowded classes; low remuneration for teachers; low quality teachers; low teacher morale; and the lack of books, teaching materials, incentives for teachers, and good buildings and infrastructure. All these factors also inhibit the use of more innovative participatory and discovery-type teaching styles. Other major factors are parents' poverty and low levels of education and the lack of a print-rich environment. All these factors are known to have a negative impact on the effectiveness of education in general and literacy instruction in particular.

Of course, students' cognitive and academic achievements in primary schools would be greatly improved if all the previously mentioned school-related and social factors were addressed. Some situations are now improving because of the new democratic government, and this gives Nigerians hope. However, in addition to these factors there is the language issue. The children of the elite group have an advantage because of their greater exposure to the English language. For many of these children, standard English—the main language of education in Nigeria—is also the language of their homes. On the other hand, for the vast majority of children in Nigeria, standard English is a language to which they are hardly exposed before they start their formal education. Language is a major factor in children's education. Their language development is intricately connected with their cognitive and academic development. The choice of which language to use for literacy instruction also has a major impact on the effectiveness of the instruction by either facilitating or inhibiting children's literacy competence.

In Nigeria, the Federal Policy on Education (Nigeria Federal Ministry of Information, 1981) promotes the use of "the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community" as the medium of initial primary school education and English as the instructional medium in the higher primary school classes. With 470 languages being spoken in Nigeria, this policy has been hard to implement, especially with the minority languages. Many languages have no writing system yet, and without books, teachers cannot give literacy instruction in the students' mother tongue. For various other reasons (e.g., the relative prestige of English, political considerations considering the

use of "the language of their immediate environment," and ideas about the greater effectiveness of English than other languages), there is a wide gap between policy and practice concerning the languages of instruction. In practice, although the medium of instruction for initial education may be the mother tongue or a language of the immediate environment, the only medium for instruction in reading and writing is frequently English.

The Obolo Language Project

Obolo is spoken by approximately 250,000 Obolo people who live on deltaic islands at the eastern fringe of the Niger Delta of Nigeria on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. The prevailing occupation of both Obolo men and women is fishing, and the main means of transport is by boat. Nowadays, there are many Obolo people who have attended secondary schools. Unfortunately, there are not many of them who attend the local secondary schools and pass the final external examinations well enough to be able to continue their education.

In 1978, through the effort of the Rivers Readers Project, some teachers formed the Obolo Language Committee to develop books for teachers and students in the Obolo language. Later, a group of Obolo Christian students formed the Obolo Bible Translation Committee. In 1981, the two groups merged to form the Obolo Language & Bible Translation Committee (OLBTC).

The Work of the OLBTC

During its first two years of existence, the OLBTC sent representatives to all the towns and villages of Obolo to enlighten the population about its existence and the plans the committee had for Bible translation, literature production, and literacy instruction. The promotion was done through launchings, enlightenment meetings, and other forms of publicity. The project became well known everywhere in the area, and churches and individuals made regular contributions to it.

The OLBTC administered the project, collected and managed its finances, and employed staff. However, the project depended heavily on voluntary services such as teaching; writing and editing; reviewing translations; organising workshops of various types; and overseeing occasions such as book launchings, distributions, and so on.

Soon after the school's programme had begun, a programme for adult literacy classes was organised in local churches. However, these classes did not continue anywhere for up to two years. There was also a Bible translation project with publications of parts of the Bible in a trial edition. Additionally, there was a publications programme that trained writers and editors with the goal of publishing several books each year to provide a stock of Obolo literature and create a richer print environment. Readers were developed for primary 1–3, and there were plans to develop readers for the higher three classes later. There were also teacher's notes and a handbook to accompany the readers, which were about experiences and objects common in Obolo children's lives and environments.

Two part-time literacy coordinators, both of whom were experienced primary school teachers, wrote the readers, contacted the education authorities, and organised the teacher training workshops. The coordinators also received an intensive three-months training session in applied linguistics at the Nigeria Bible Translation Centre.

The regular class teachers were trained in local workshops that were two weeks long. The workshops' content was in two parts: (1) training the teachers to read and write in the Obolo language and (2) an introduction to the readers with practice teaching. A number of teachers who did well during the teacher training workshop were selected and taught to function as trainers during subsequent workshops because newly recruited or transferred teachers needed to be trained. There were also a few refresher courses, usually just for one or two days. Several times, the workshops were organised together with the local school board.

There was no other intervention in the schools except for the introduction of the Obolo language during some of the periods that had already been assigned to language arts. In 1985, the teaching of the Obolo language was begun in primary 1 in the three pilot schools. In 1986, Obolo-language teaching started in schools all over the area. The fact that the community embraced the project and became enthusiastic about writing and having

Obolo books certainly contributed to the success of the school programme, and many teachers were involved with this project.

Project Results

Observations

- Teachers were surprised to find that, even in primary 1, students can start to read with understanding. They made much better progress in literacy acquisition in Obolo than other students had done in English.
- The students clearly enjoyed reading the Obolo books. They discussed the stories and proverbs on the playground and at home. They also begged their parents to buy these books for them. In some cases, the students saved up the money they were given for snacks to buy an Obolo book instead. They started to read the books in small groups together at home.
- Parents began to notice that their rather young children could really read, and even those parents who had never been to school developed an interest in the books. Some parents also expressed interest in learning to read.
- Some parents in one large fishing port visited their hometown and saw students reading Obolo. Upon their return to the fishing port, they demanded that the teachers there also start to teach Obolo.
- When the headmaster in one of the two pilot schools noticed that the students in primary 1 and 2 were reading better than before, he became very enthusiastic. He became a good ambassador of the project to other headmasters and education officers. Later, the headmaster said that to learn to read Obolo had helped his son learn to read French in the elite secondary school he attended.
- In the pilot schools, the teachers tried to continue teaching Obolo in primary 4–6 for one or two periods each week, even though there were no readers for these grades.
- In one school, there was a teacher who kept the students' interest going by helping them read editions of the Obolo magazine. The magazines became very popular with the students, and because they were cut on stencil and produced locally, they were affordable enough for many of the students to purchase.
- The same teacher also let the students write compositions. When he saw their enthusiasm and the interesting things they wrote, he—a prominent member of the Obolo Language Committee—told the students that they might be able to start a new Obolo magazine written for and by children. He also brought the teachers in the other pilot school into this plan, and then, more time was spent doing creative writing. The result was a large collection of pieces of creative writing that were used to start the Obolo children's magazine. It was startling to have students able to express themselves in writing in the primary schools because essay writing had been something that was done only in secondary schools, and students there saw it as a very painful exercise.
- A school official observed that the classes of students who had been taught the Obolo language from primary 1 up to primary 5 and 6 were definitely doing much better than previous classes. He asserted that it was not only a matter of better competence in reading and writing but also of better academic performance in all subjects.
- A teacher who had been teaching primary 4 for many years also observed that the students who had been taught the Obolo language seemed to be more intelligent.

Testing

Although the teachers in the pilot schools definitely saw improvements in the students' literacy competence—which certainly had applied to the English language as well as the Obolo language—there was no more objective evidence of improvement. We were aware of the possibility of a Hawthorne effect (where the interest raised by the experiment may by itself have enhanced the performance of students and teachers) because these were the pilot schools and they were the closest

to the project office. Other schools started teaching Obolo at a slower rate.

We got some additional evidence that teaching the Obolo language had helped the students with English when the local government council organised an essay-writing competition in English and children from our two pilot schools won the first three prizes. Secondly, there were the results of the research Afiesimama (1991) conducted into the state of literacy achievement in primary schools. The research was conducted in 13 schools, carefully selected from all the local government areas of the then Rivers State. Two of these were Obolo schools with Obolo language education. The students' literacy achievement was tested by having the primary 6 students write an essay in English about their school. The children also were required to write an essay in their mother tongue after they completed the English essay.

When the schools were ranked according to their percentages of functionally literate students based on the English essays, the two Obolo schools surprisingly ranked second and third on the list, having 69% and 60% literacy rates for their student populations, respectively. The school that ranked first was an urban elite school with a 100% literacy rate among its students. The two schools of underprivileged urban students—who had been expected to do better than all the rural schools because of their greater exposure to English through the radio and television and because they were taught only in English—did not do as well as the two Obolo schools. In fact, the best of the underprivileged, urban schools had only a 52% literacy rate among its students.

When each student's results in English and in Obolo were compared, it was clear that the same students who did well in English also did very well in Obolo. Likewise, the students who were poor in English also were poor in Obolo.

Conclusion

The data of the Obolo project indeed show that language skills are applied across languages. It was no loss for Obolo students to spend five of the seven periods for language arts on the Obolo language rather than the English language. Instead, their literacy competence developed better through the Obolo language, which in turn resulted in greater competence in English. We also observed this phenomenon when Obolo adults who were already literate in English attended a three-day literacy course to learn how to read and write in their mother tongue. It was clear to any casual observer that the adults who were the most fluent readers in English also were the most fluent readers in Obolo.

It is noteworthy that in the Obolo project, no changes were made to the curriculum other than the introduction of literacy instruction in the students' mother tongue. Compared with other schools where the mother tongue was not introduced, the only differences were a two-week teacher training course specifically for the teaching of literacy in the mother tongue and a set of three readers to be used with students. It should be observed that all the negative factors known to influence the effectiveness of literacy instruction were still present in the schools and the society. Therefore, it appears that language is a stronger determining factor in education than many other issues or that language can have a strong positive effect despite the presence of many negative factors militating against effective literacy instruction.

Some of the value of mother tongue instruction is children's greater motivation for reading and increased opportunity to use writing and parents' increased interest and involvement in their children's educations.

In areas of Nigeria in which children do not live in a literate environment, literacy instruction in the mother tongue makes it much easier to demonstrate to children what reading and writing are and that these activities are supposed to make sense than it is to demonstrate literacy. Instruction in the mother tongue makes it possible to build on the children's cultural background—what they know and understand from their experiences outside school. Such experiences contribute to make students into better adapted and integrated persons, less removed and estranged from their environment by education.

If permanent literacy is one of the main objectives of primary school education in Nigeria, literacy instruction in the mother tongue appears to render superior results in rural areas. This instruction should be continued throughout the six years

of primary education, an idea that is supported by Afiesimama's (1991) strong recommendation that instruction of initial literacy in the mother tongue "should also be taught as a subject throughout the duration of primary education, and [be] tested in the final examinations" (p. 141).

Some subjects also can be taught using the the mother tongue if textbooks are developed for these subjects. Whenever the medium of instruction is the mother tongue, the notes that students are expected to copy also should be written in the mother tongue.

In order to provide sufficient mother tongue education in all the languages of Nigeria, there must be a concerted, cooperative effort of all people and groups concerned. The respective language communities need to be contacted, and they should be involved in the decision making from the planning stage onward. Afiesimama's study (1991) reveals the importance of community support in the success of mother tongue instruction. She found that despite the Rivers Readers Project having prepared mother-tongue readers in 20 of the other languages in the area, the readers were no longer used in schools. Afiesimama also found that many teachers did not think it advantageous to use the mother tongue or the children's primary language in education. This belief was especially prevalent among people living in the state capital and in nearby areas where the local languages are used only in the homes and/or with relatives and where pidgin English and English are the languages most used with others.

Finally, all institutions for the training of primary education teachers need to incorporate mother-tongue language arts and demonstrate how the methods differ from teaching English. Also, findings from research on the relationship of language development to cognitive and academic development need to be a part of teacher training.

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Incorporating the Mother Tongue Into Special Education for Children With Reading Failure

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Nigeria

The concerted efforts of many professionals in the education field are required to assist children who experience reading failure. Learning disabilities specialists have an especially important contribution to make because part of their responsibilities is to act as resource teachers in the education of children with reading problems. The tools employed in special education are specially designed to meet the needs of exceptional children.

In Nigeria, teaching reading in English—the official and main language of schooling—is very difficult for many children who do not grow up in an English-speaking environment because it tends to alienate reading materials from their home experiences. For this reason, educators have advocated mother tongue instruction in Nigerian schools (Afolayan, 1970; Bamgbose, 1976; Fafunwa, Macauley, & Sokoya, 1989). In view of the high rate of reading failure in schools, therefore, it would seem advantageous to use the mother tongue for reading remediation. However, learning disabilities specialists are faced with the challenge of how to use the mother tongue for remediation and still train children who are nonreaders to learn to read in English. I conducted a study in 2000 (Andzayi, 2001) to find out how effectively Hausa—the home language of many children in Central Nigeria—could be incorporated into a reading remediation programme with six primary 4 nonreaders. Specifically, the study compared the effectiveness of remediation using the language experience approach in Hausa alone (L1), English alone (L2), and a combination of the two languages used concurrently. Each of six children was taught in each of the three language conditions, which were alternated randomly in two-week periods throughout the 16 weeks of the study. Each child learned individually at his or her own pace, using the words drawn from his or her own language experience stories.

The language condition that was consistently found to be most effective was the use of Hausa and English concurrently. Each child showed more positive gains in sight recognition of high-frequency words in English and Hausa and in the percentage of sentences comprehended in both languages. In addition, each child's score on an attitude rating scale also was highest during the periods when the two languages were used concurrently. I found that once the children began to learn to read, their English sight vocabulary continued to increase even when they were taught only in Hausa. This increase occurred because the regular classroom instruction in which English was used had become meaningful to them, and they were able to transfer their reading skills in Hausa to English.

The children also adjusted to the variations in treatment conditions and were not confused by the changes. This result shows clearly how they were able to transfer the skills in learning L1 to learning to read more quickly in L2. In fact, towards the end of the intervention, the children had built up so much confidence that they were eager to read books in English, which shows that when children can read in their home language, they also take pride in the fact that they can read in the school language. The child's attitude toward reading is very important in special education. Children with reading difficulty tend to lack self-confidence and develop negative attitude towards reading. Because they avoid reading, they miss the

practice that they need to develop their reading skills. (See Pietromonaco, 1985; Stanovich, 1986).

Implications for Methodology in Teaching Children With Reading Failure to Read

I found that the use of the language experience approach with a combination of L1 and L2 was particularly meaningful to the nonreaders. The result reinforced the fact that the way we teach children to read influences the extent to which children will view reading as a meaningful activity. Too often in Nigerian schools, the written forms of words to be taught to children are not in their spoken vocabulary, so the children learn to recite entire pages of print from books without understanding the content. Such practices do not encourage children to see reading as meaningful communication. When the language experience approach was used in English and Hausa, the children were able to use their familiar language and personal experiences to create written texts for their reading instruction. They also were able to see what these same texts look and sound like when they are translated into English. Thus, they discovered that their own thoughts—originally expressed in their mother tongue—remained meaningful even when they were expressed in English. The language experience approach has the additional advantage in schools in which there is a shortage of books because all that is required to construct texts for the children are markers and paper.

Implications for the Regular Classroom

Although the focus of the study was on special education, the findings suggest that the L1–L2 teaching conditions also could be applied to the regular classroom. The situation in Nigerian primary schools now is that reading is not properly taught in the primary school, largely because the nature of the reading process is not well understood by the teachers. Primary school teachers could be trained to use both English and Hausa concurrently for remediation in the regular classroom, using techniques such as Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) or News on the Board that involve the children in dictating their own texts.

The present study also has implications for changing teachers' attitude towards pupils who cannot read. It shows that nonreaders can make remarkable progress with the methods used in the study. Therefore, classroom teachers should not disregard children who are nonreaders. Teachers need to be more patient with such children and help build their self-confidence that will promote a positive attitude towards print. Teachers should always bear in mind the "Matthew effect" theory of Stanovich (1986), who says the longer a child remains a nonreader, the more hindered he becomes and the more difficult it becomes for teachers to help him develop a positive attitude and to teach him how to read.

Conclusion

The teachers who were part of this study were successfully trained after only two weeks because the method is not very difficult to learn. In fact, the teachers were very excited with the whole procedure. The method is also inexpensive. Teachers can successfully conduct remediation for children by using the treatment procedure in classrooms that are noisy, lack furniture, and are generally not conducive to learning. Finally, the present study has demonstrated that a love for reading can be developed in children if they are taught to read in a meaningful and functional way.

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Mother Tongue Literacy in the Zambian New Breakthrough to Literacy Programme

Francis Sampa

Zambia

Why Does Zambia Need a Reading Programme?

It is important for me to stress that the Zambian government recognises that there is serious need for a reading programme. The following research has revealed that there are very poor reading levels in Zambia among children in schools and those leaving school.

The South African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality study was conducted among grade 6 pupils in 1995. The findings were that 25% of the children tested were able to read at the minimum level and only 3% were able to read at desirable levels.

The National Assessment survey was conducted in 1999 among children in grade 5. This survey found that 23% of the children tested were able to read at the minimum level and only 3% were able to read at desirable levels. The National Assessment also noted that the reading levels were so low that it was difficult for children to learn across the curriculum because they were unable to read their school textbooks with understanding. The survey also noted that urban children performed better than rural children did and boys read better than girls. The rural girls had the lowest performance.

The Primary Reading Programme (PRP) Baseline Data study was conducted by the PRP in October 1999 and covered grades 1–6. Both reading and writing levels among children were tested in all districts countrywide in Zambian languages and English. The study found that children were reading at a level two grades below what was expected in English and three grade levels below what was expected in Zambian languages. This study also revealed that urban children performed better than rural children did.

The Danger Signs

Ministry of Education officials have observed that the reading problem in Zambia is serious because primary and secondary school children cannot read at the end of their education. They cannot read and write at desirable levels in both Zambian languages and the English language. For students in tertiary education, the situation is the same. Most of them cannot read their mother tongues, and their essays are usually poorly written in English language, too. Their literacy skills are poor.

Generally, the reading culture in Zambia has gone down. Few people use the small number of libraries that exist in the country. However, functional literacy skills are evident. People read in order to pass examinations or interviews. They also are able to read road signs and make budgets in their homes. However, we want to create a literate nation, a nation that would love and value books and write stories in their own languages and in English if they can.

Some of the factors identified as leading to the poor reading levels include inappropriate teaching methods, lack of emphasis on reading in the timetable and in teacher training college, and the use of the second language—English—for initial literacy.

Ministry of Education Interventions

The Ministry of Education has undertaken many interventions to search for explanations of and

solutions to the literacy problem. The first reason that was identified for low reading levels in the country was the lack of books in the schools. As a solution, from 1993 to 1995, the Ministry of Education introduced the Book Box Project and flooded schools with books. However, when an evaluation was conducted, no literacy progress had resulted from the project.

When the first National Reading Forum was established in 1995/1996, it explained the issue in more detail and concluded that Zambia had been following a wrong-language policy for initial literacy. Since 1965, there has been a "straight for English" policy under which children have been taught to read and write in English from their first day of school. The National Reading Forum recommends that the language policy be changed and the following guidelines be used:

- Initial literacy in grade 1 should be in a familiar language.
- Literacy in English should be introduced in grade 2.
- There should be improved teaching of reading in grades 3–7.

As a result of the above recommendations, an education policy was put in place in May 1996 to try to improve the literacy situation. The policy called Educating Our Future states the following:

- A fundamental aim of the curriculum for lower and middle basic classes (grades 1–7) is to enable pupils to read and write clearly, correctly, and confidently in a Zambian language and English. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 34)
- All pupils will be given an opportunity to learn the initial basic skills of reading and writing in a local language. (p. 39)
- Officially, English will be used as the language of instruction, but the language used for initial literacy learning in grades 1–4 will be one that seems best suited to promote meaningful learning by children. (p. 45)

Why Should Initial Literacy Be in the Mother Tongue?

Zambia recommends that initial literacy instruction be conducted in a child's mother tongue because learning processes are most effective when the language of instruction is familiar to the children and their teacher. The learning builds on the knowledge and competencies that the children already possess and is expanded to include the new learning involved in reading in the English language. Additionally, children are more comfortable when they learn in their mother tongue, which boosts their learning capacity and self-confidence level. The Basic School Curriculum Framework states that "this [approach] will contribute to establishing the school and formal learning as something attainable and positive in the child's mind" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 22).

Children need the opportunity to express themselves in discussion and be proud of their Zambian culture and traditions. When a familiar language is used in school, the school environment will not look foreign to the children. It will lay a foundation for acquiring knowledge, building concepts, and investigating and formulating hypotheses.

Teaching initial literacy skills in the children's mother tongue does not mean that the importance of English as the national language of communication in Zambia is being diminished. In fact, the learning process in both the children's home language and in English is greatly facilitated by this approach.

Teaching children to read in their mother tongue will bring a challenge to local writers. More storybooks written in Zambian languages will be required by children both in school and after school. Class libraries will require a variety of books in all the grades.

Finding a Method to Improve Reading

After the language policy outlined in Educating Our Future had been put in place, the National Reading Committee recommended in 1997 that there should be a search for an appropriate method for teaching initial literacy in children's mother tongue in grade 1 and above. The Ministry of Education piloted Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL), a course used by the nongovernmental organisation Molteno in South Africa. This course was chosen because it is based on a familiar language policy and uses appropriate methodology: It is learner-centred, allows children to learn in small

groups, and uses the language experience approach.

In 1998, BTL was started in the Kasama and Mungwi districts of Zambia's Northern Province. There were 25 schools, 50 classes, and 2,000 pupils involved. The language used was Icibemba. According to the pilot project's external evaluation—which was conducted in 1998 when the children were in grade 2—the pilot was a great success. The reading level had risen to 64% from the previous 25% level. Children at the beginning of grade 2 were reading at a level equivalent to grade 4.

The Primary Reading Programme

With this success of the BTL pilot, the Ministry of Education decided that Zambia should continue using the same method for teaching initial literacy in the mother tongue. However, the course needed some modifications in order to suit the Zambian requirements. In April 1999, PRP was established. The three objectives of the programme are as follows:

- Achievement of initial literacy in a local familiar language in grade 1 through the New Breakthrough to Literacy course.
- Building on these skills in English during grade 2 by providing a literacy course.
- Consolidation of reading skills in grades 3–7 by providing a Read On literacy course for teaching reading and writing in both Zambian languages and English.

The New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) Course

The New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) course was created from the Breakthrough to Literacy programme of South Africa. Zambia asked for permission from Molteno to modify the course in order to suit the Zambian situation, and the modifications were made in 1999. Therefore, the Zambian NBTL is a course that meets the requirements of every teacher in all parts of the country.

Children should begin to read in one of the seven local languages used in the Ministry of Education—Icibemba, Silozi, Chitonga, Cinyanja, Lunda, Luvale, or Kiikaonde. By the end of grade 1, Zambian children are expected to acquire a reading vocabulary of at least 200 words, be able to read short stories with understanding, and be able to compose short stories of at least three sentences. They also should have developed good handwriting and learned to work cooperatively in class.

Teaching materials for the classes were improved by using the following criteria.

Sustainable. It is hoped that materials are of good quality and can be used for a long time before a replacement is made.

Teacher-friendly. The Teacher's Guide (Ministry of Education, 2002) has been written in such a way that it is easy to follow. The addition of a learner's activity book (Ministry of Education, 2001) has saved the teachers some time in preparation of activities. Teachers select appropriate activities from a variety given in the learner's activity book.

Illustrations. Zambian artists have done illustrations and artwork so the concepts in school materials are familiar to the Zambian children.

Stories. A class library of storybooks accompanies the course. The books have been written or adapted by Zambians so they are based on the Zambian culture.

Portable. The teaching kit has been made portable so teachers can take away materials in classrooms without security.

Syllabic approach. The syllabic approach to teaching local languages has been added to other approaches as a way of reinforcing reading.

Issues of importance to the Ministry—gender and HIV/AIDS, for example—also were featured in the materials and stories.

The literacy skills acquired in local languages will be used to develop literacy skills in English in grade 2. Given specific skills to learn to read and write in the early grades, children will be able to learn across the curriculum and will achieve their full potential in national examinations.

What Has Made the NBTL So Successful?

Evaluations of the NBTL course continue to show remarkable success. For example, after the course

had been tried in three other Zambian provinces in two more languages—Cinyanja and Silozi—an evaluation was conducted in October 2000 while the children were in grade 1. The percentage of grade 1 pupils who could read and write rose from 25% in 1885 to 59% in 2000. This increase was in spite of many disturbances in the school calendar such as the late opening of schools and closure during a census exercise.

What are the reasons for the dramatic success? First, I must stress that PRP is a reading programme and not a languages programme, which means that PRP courses are literacy courses and not language courses. Therefore, NBTL is a reading course. The following are some of the factors that have contributed to the course's success:

- The Basic Education Curriculum framework means that there is a separation of reading teaching from language teaching. In the curriculum now, the teaching of reading has been given five hours per week in grades 1–5 while two-and-a-half hours are for teaching the English language.
- The language policy of initial literacy in the mother tongue in grade 1 enables children to learn from the known to the unknown, which makes learning meaningful. The children understand what they are reading about, contribute to the discussion, and become active learners.
- The method is child-centred and allows a teacher to meet children in four small groups at a time. This structure enables the teacher to follow children's progress and help the weaker ones. The method creates a friendly atmosphere, and children appear happy, outgoing, and self-assured as they work. This observation is illustrated by the evaluation report stating that NBTL works. Not only does the method quickly develop an impressive range of reading and writing skills but it also has other immense and equally important spin-off effects, particularly on the life of a child. The more stable and confident young children in a NBTL class, happily working away with their peers, is an aspect unmeasured in this report.
- The provision of appropriate teaching and learning materials such as the learner's activity book.
- Adequate and appropriate inservice and preservice training for teachers before using the course books.
- The reading environment in the classroom. There are "talking" walls with both the children's and the teacher's work posted on them. The class library has attractive readers in a corner that children use from their first day at school.
- Sensitisation of key stakeholders about the language policy and its benefits.
- Teamwork at all levels of the Ministry of Education officials and teachers.

Teacher Training

Inservice Training

Since the implementation of NBTL, the PRP Implementation Committee has been conducting training through the inservice programme. There is currently a team of 10 national trainers who were picked from the teachers involved with the pilot phase in 1998. The selected teachers were trained as trainers, and they have been training other teachers to use the NBTL course and Step In To English course for grade 2. For national expansion this team is being built to reach 50 members. Soon there will be 30 teachers, 10 primary college lecturers from language and literacy education, and 10 curriculum language specialists from the Curriculum Development Centre, making up a team of 50 trainers. At every training session, there have been headteachers, inservice providers, inspectors, curriculum language specialists (for all seven languages), and a representative from each of the 10 primary training colleges attending.

Inservice training will continue through the School Programme of Inservice for the Term, which is a continuous professional development programme for teachers and a vehicle by which all school-based inservice training is delivered to teachers.

Preservice training

An exercise of writing modules for the Zambia Teacher Education Course recently has been com-

pleted. These modules are for language and literacy education in the primary colleges. Four modules have been written as teacher support materials for the college-based year, and one module has been written for the school-based year. These modules contain all the courses under PRP. As soon as the modules are finalised, the colleges will start training teachers in the literacy courses.

Teachers also are trained in how to deal with slow learners and how to refer special cases to parents and education experts who know how to deal with children who have learning difficulties.

Sensitisation of Stakeholders

We have been sensitising the public about initial literacy in a local language since the PRP pilot phase. As soon as schools were selected, inspectors went to schools to explain to the teachers and the parents the new policy and its advantages and disadvantages. The meetings with parents were organised through Parent Teacher Associations. The headteachers continued with sensitisation even during the registration of grade 1 children. Many parents were supportive because they recalled that they had learned to read and write first in their mother tongue and then in English, and they thought that reading was easy.

This sensitisation has continued to the present. The Primary Reading Programme has been raising general awareness of the importance of literacy by having weekly articles in the Zambia *Daily Mail* and through the production of the *fastele fastele* (a nickname meaning "fast-moving") radio programmes that are broadcast twice a week. When there are educational events, PRP also puts up a booth to enlighten people on the importance of literacy. The Primary Reading Programme is also a member of the Reading Association of Zambia. Leaflets have been produced on how to teach reading, and they have been distributed by the National Assessment to all Zambian schools. Community schools have not been left out of the programme, either. As the NBTL course expands, approximately 300 more community schools will be included.

Community Involvement

The NBTL method encourages community members to play a role in children's education by providing them with exercise books and pencils. Because children are able to write, exercise books are used very quickly and need to be replaced by parents. Members of the community also have been invited to NBTL classes to tell stories to the children. Some of these stories are written down by teachers and retold to the children later.

Parents have been asked to follow up on the progress of their children in NBTL schools. They are allowed to visit the class and look at their children's progress charts. Sometimes, parents sit with teachers to discuss their children's problems and are advised on how they can help improve their children's literacy skills at home. There are also important events such as open days in the school, which parents attend. The parents are invited to come to school on the open days to listen to children reading and see what children have written. The parents also read to the children on these days.

Looking Ahead

It is anticipated that in the future there will be more children reading, understanding all subjects, and passing examinations in Zambia. Because of these improvements, more children will proceed to higher grades. The children who may not find places in higher grades will be equipped with literacy skills allowing them to understand instructions on how to combat diseases such as malaria. They also will understand instructions on subsistence farming and how to prepare manure locally in their communities.

Challenges

Although it is successful, the NBTL course has not been implemented without challenges such as the following:

- **Teacher shortages.** The teaching method used in the NBTL course is very demanding and requires teachers to individualise instruction, which is difficult in many Zambian schools because they are understaffed and many teachers teach double sessions. However, the Zambia Teacher Education

Course is aiming at solving this problem through the college and school-based training programme.

- **Low salaries.** Teachers involved with NBTL work long hours and are not given any incentives. They need to be encouraged because the only motivation they get is the satisfaction that children are able to read after a few months in school.

Conclusion

We are very proud in Zambia that we progressed in implementing the initial literacy course in children's mother tongues and that the success at every step has been noticeable. The joint annual review of the PRP (2001) by the Ministry of Education and Department for International Development concludes that "there is ample evidence on the ground that PRP has revolutionised the learning mechanisms in the country, and that the results can only be described as astonishing."

We all have seen the improvement of children's reading levels in NBTL classes and how the children who are moving from these classes are successfully coping with reading in the English language. The programme is working. The success of NBTL hinges on the support it has gotten from stakeholders—especially parents—who through sensitisation have understood the importance of introducing initial literacy in the mother tongue. The children also love it because it is working and they are able to read.

We are ready to share our experiences about this course with other countries willing to learn from Zambia's example. We are also very open to ideas from other people for improving the course. This course is one way of ensuring that children learn to read and write as early as grade 1. It is also pleasing that this NBTL course has features more similar to a Zambian course than to an imported one. The course will help our children read fluently and write clearly, thereby improving their lives. Reading is for life!

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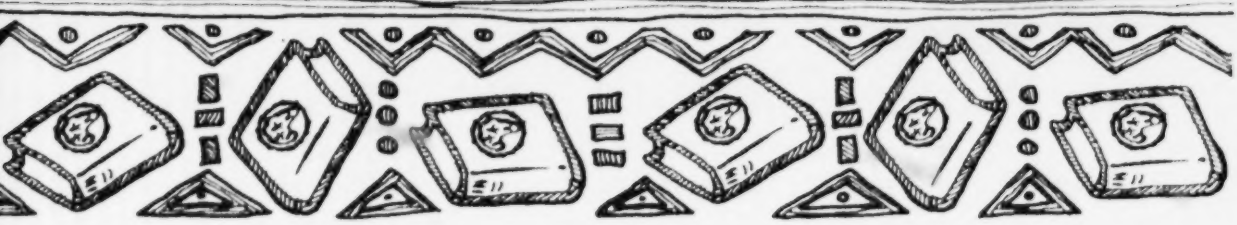

In October 2001, the Reading Association of Nigeria and the International Reading Association's International Development in Africa Committee hosted the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Reading. More than 300 educators met at the National Women in Development Centre in Abuja, Nigeria, for a conference organized around the theme "Reading for All: Building Communities Where Literacy Thrives." The roster included educators from 14 African nations, Canada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

This collection of 40 papers selected from more than 150 conference presentations addresses the need to develop materials on best practices in African literacy education and offers a means for people interested in the development of literacy in Africa to share their ideas. Literacy workers, parents, teachers, scholars, education officials, and nongovernmental organizations with an interest in literacy promotion in Africa will find this volume to be a valuable resource.

Arua E. Arua was chair of the International Reading Association's International Development in Africa Committee (2002–2003) and is a faculty member in the Department of English at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana.

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